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CONCEPT ART LEGENDS

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Welcome...
to better resolutions

Happy new year! If your new year's resolution is to rekindle your relationship with drawing and painting, and to get your art seen by people who matter, you've arrived at the right place for inspiration and guidance. In our news section, a collection of professional artists and art directors reveal how you can make this year your best in art. I'd advise you to read their insights on page 20.

It's hard to hear this, but it's true: it's all down to you. What you get out of art (and life) is what you put into it. I know that taking something you've created in the security of your own home and putting it out there for others to see can seem like an enormous undertaking. But everyone – even the professional artists you see in this magazine – has to start somewhere. And if you don't even start, you'll never, ever, end up anywhere. Take the artists in our Concept Art Legends feature (page 40). The art in this collection is a celebration of the unique styles and different voices an artist can bring to their creations. But these people didn't start out as fully formed creators and I'm sure that even now they have days when they don't feel up to scratch.

I saw a great quote on Twitter recently from Chris Oatley, where he said: "Artists, you chose one of the most challenging creative paths imaginable. Don't make the challenges MORE difficult by beating yourselves up." Does this sound like you?

So, here's to 2015. I hope it's a happy and creative one for you all.

Claire

Claire Howlett, Editor
claire@imaginefx.com

Our special cover for subscribers this issue.

NO.1 FOR DIGITAL ARTISTS

ImagineFX
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Concept Art
Legends

"Concept art is solving a visual problem… It should solve what the client is trying to visualise"
Concept art legend Khang Le

Reader FXPosé
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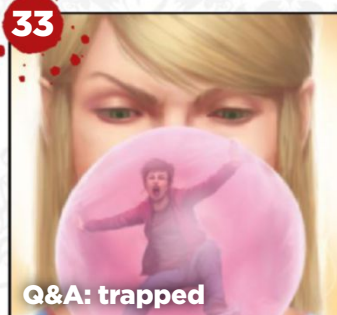
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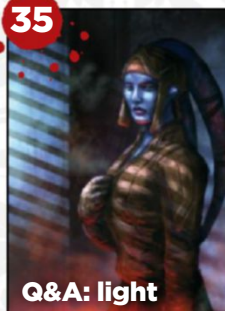
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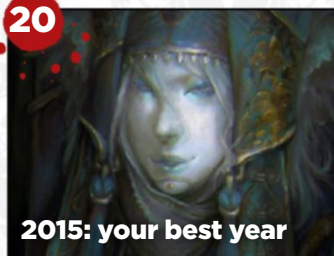
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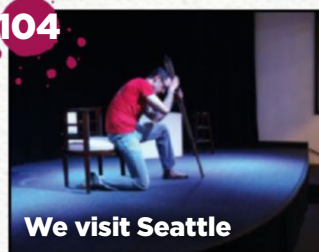
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Bruce Pennington

NO.1 FOR DIGITAL ARTISTS ImagineFX
Resources

Getting your hands on all of this issue's videos, artwork and brushes is quick and easy. Just visit our dedicated web page at **http://ifxm.ag/art118skills**

OVER 5 HOURS of workshop and Q&A videos to watch and learn from!

WORKSHOP VIDEO

Create great characters

Arthur Mask concepts characters with different body types, tied together with style and colour.
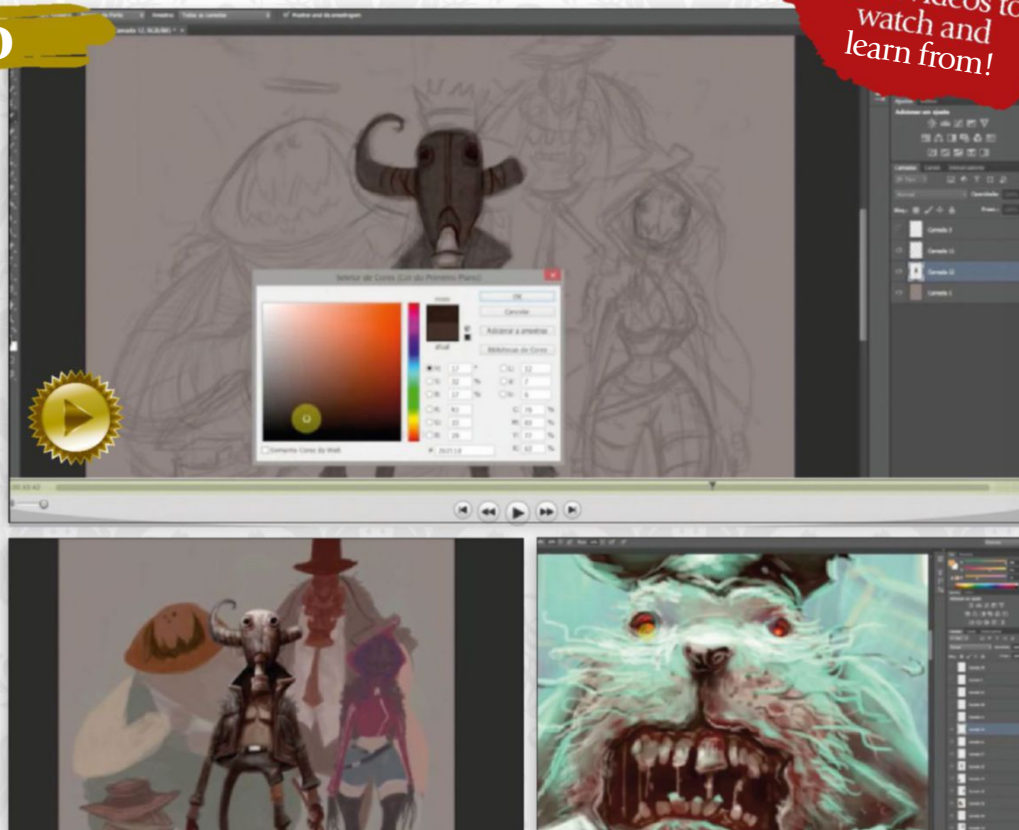
GET YOUR RESOURCES

You're three steps away from this issue's resource files...

1 Go to the website
Type this into your browser's address bar (not the search bar):
http://ifxm.ag/art118skills

2 Find the files you want
Search through the list of resources to watch or download.

3 Download what you need
You can download all of the files at once, or individually.

NO.1 FOR DIGITAL ARTISTS ImagineFX

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EXCLUSIVE VIDEO TUITION!

Watch our videos to gain a unique insight into how our artists create their stunning art

WORKSHOP VIDEOS

Steve Argyle
Learn how to create a fantasy painting with Wacom's portable Cintiq Companion.
Plus WIPs, brushes and final art
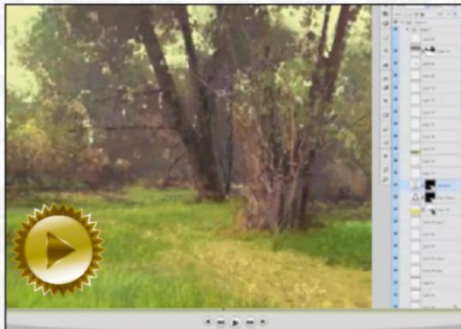
Q&A VIDEOS

Robh Ruppel
How to start with a simple mono image and ensure effective composition.
Plus WIPs and final image

Paco Rico Torres
Think of heat being like light, to paint realistic and eye-catching molten glass.
Plus WIPs and final image

Jonathan Standing
How to use modular shapes to help create a fleet of spaceships quickly.
Plus WIPs and final image

TRAINING
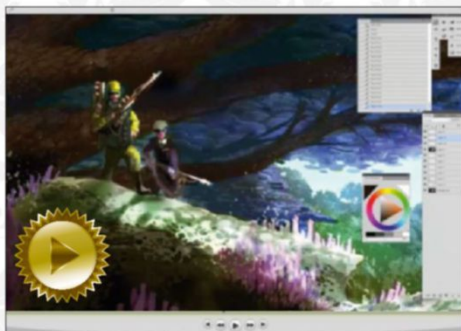
Jonathan Standing
Learn the importance of negative space for depicting light through a forest canopy.
Plus WIPs and final image
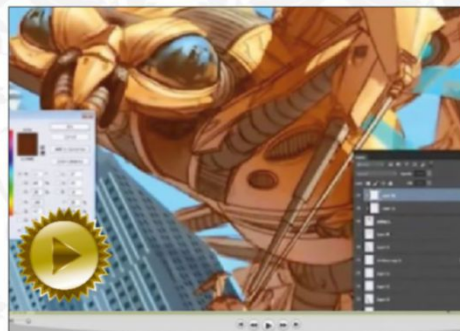
Tony Foti
Concoct a strong narrative and a pick and mix approach to create a giant sci-fi insect.
Plus WIPs and final image
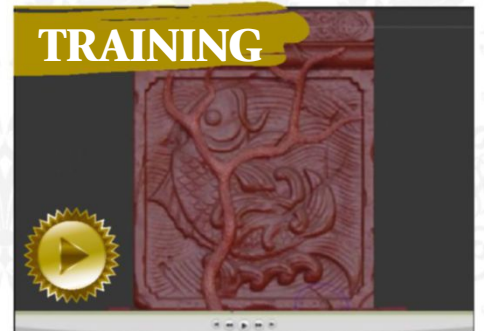
Seth Thompson
Get some valuable insights into work efficiency, as Seth creates a 3D environment in his new training video.

PLUS WIPs and finished art available to download, created by accomplished professional artists from around the world, including James Gurney, Carmen Sinek, Yoann Lossel, Miles Johnston, Paris Christou, John Petersen, Mark Molnar and Arthur Mask.

25 CUSTOM BRUSHES, INCLUDING…

SMUDGE BLEND BRUSH
Miles Johnston uses this brush with the Smudge tool for softening edges.

BRUSH ARTHUR MASK 02
This brush helps Arthur Mask to create texture on organic objects.

BIG FUZZ
Carmen Sinek's go-to tool for applying soft colour gradients and glows.

Reader FXPosé

THE PLACE TO SHARE YOUR FANTASY ART

Eddie Del Rio
LOCATION: US
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MEDIA: Photoshop

Eddie is a concept artist with an enviable list of clients. His credits in TV, film and video games include EA, Disney, Activision, LucasArts and Lucasfilm. His most recent projects were recent blockbuster Godzilla and designs for forthcoming AAA-game Star Citizen.

"When I was a kid growing up in the seventies," Eddie says, "I had two big interest that filled my life: Star Wars and comics. I spent most of my time lost in my Kenner action figures, immersed in comics – and, oh yes, drawing."
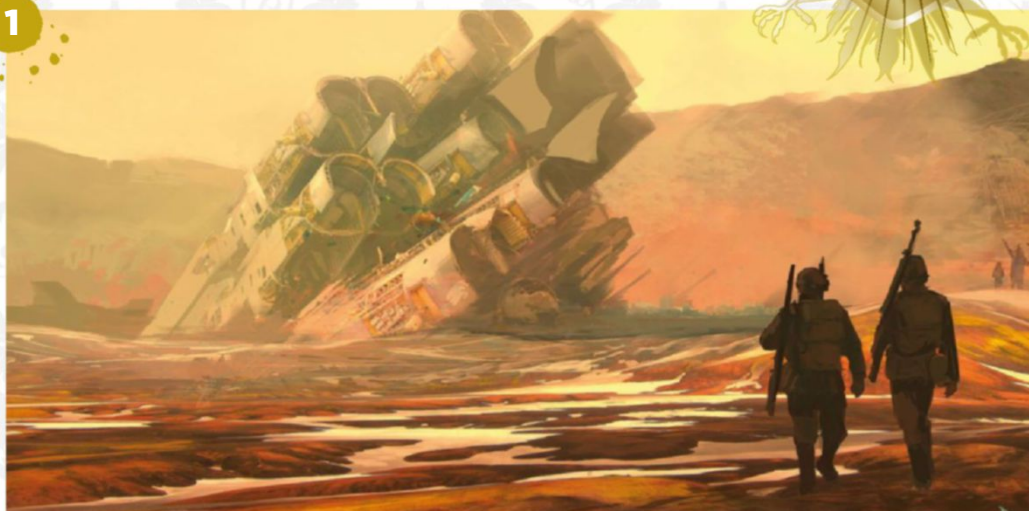
1 STRANDED "This is a very quick sketch of a scene from my IP. It was about me getting my idea out fast. I spent between 40 and 50 minutes on this image. Lots of fun going on for me."

2 HY-ACK FIGHTER "This is a homage to an important film from my childhood – one of the films that led me to my career in entertainment design. Not hard to guess what that movie is!"

3 REPAIRS "I drew this for a personal project that I'm developing. One of my first love is mechs. Especially giant pilotable ones!"

4 DECAY "I started this out as a very quick black and white rough for a commercial project. The idea wasn't chosen for the project, so later I decided to finish it for myself. It ended up being very different to my original sketch."

Email your submissions to fxpose@imaginefx.com

Artist crit

Illustrator and concept artist Peter Mohrbacher says Eddie's art knows its place

"Eddie has a done a wonderful job of creating a sense of 'place.' It enables the viewer not only to enjoy the scene in the abstract, but to get a sense of what it would be like to be there."

Ardalan Izadian

LOCATION: Iran
WEB: http://ifxm.ag/a-izadian
EMAIL: ardalan.iz@gmail.com
MEDIA: Photoshop

Ardalan learnt all about traditional art a decade ago, and eventually became an instructor in the atelier at which he studied. While teaching he continued working on his own illustrations as a freelancer. He was eventually attracted to concept art, working on several indie game projects.

"I still enjoy spending some of my free time on fine arts," the Tehran-based artists says. "I guess having a broad skill-set gives me a better perspective and understanding of visual arts, which has helped me improve as a concept artist and designer."

1 LUDUS "A horizontal crop of a poster that was created for my class at Inverse School. I used a photo reference containing four characters out of the six you see. I designed the other two from scratch, ensuring they had the same design language as their compatriots."

2 EMOTIONS IN MOTION "In this poster for Motion Graphics, I wanted to bring together elements of graphic design and illustration."

Email your submissions to fxpose@imaginefx.com

it's
Time we Stand
For our Dreams!

IMAGINEFX CRIT

"This image conveys the awkwardness of children who don't want to pose in front of the camera. Their downbeat, utilitarian clothing and bizarre headgear only serve to strengthen their message written on the placard."
Cliff Hope,
Operations Editor

Michał Sawtyruk
LOCATION: Poland
WEB: www.behance.net/pegazord
EMAIL: michal.sawtyruk@gmail.com
MEDIA: Photoshop

Michał studied new media art in Warsaw at the Polish-Japanese Institute of Information Technology. He began his career at a small mobile games company before moving on to Platige Image to work as a concept artist. Both his studio and freelance work – mostly game projects and commissions for creative agencies – showcase a pared-down, stylised aesthetic built around stunning lighting.

"There are many sources of inspiration that influence me," Michał says. "I like creating simplified things, and try not to spend too much time polishing my work. The goal for me is to achieve a tangible atmosphere using light and interesting compositions."

IMAGINEFX CRIT

"Michał has a fantastic grasp of the power of light and shade, and applies it to maximum effect in his urban concept art. Notice how his use of directional lines successfully pulls the viewer into his atmospheric scenes."
Gary Evans,
Staff Writer

1 CITYSCAPE "My aim was to create a loose painting that captures the mood of the city. I started from a sketch with simple colour palette. I blocked some basic shapes and arranged the composition. Then I added details using references of cars and buildings. It took me around 15 hours to finish."

2 CITY SCENERY 2 "I took inspiration from George Orwell's 1984. I wanted to create a sci-fi look and also build some interesting lighting that would direct the viewer's focus. I think I achieved the desired effect."

3 BUNNY "Various scenes from gangster movies inspired this piece. At first I focused only on mood and the composition. Then I added the bunny ears, almost at the end, to give it some visual interest and a sense of mystery."

4 CITY SCENERY "Although it's a crowded urban scene, I wanted to capture the afternoon's sunny atmosphere, and it took me a little bit more time to make it look realistic. I made some composition thumbnails and went to details straight after that. I'm pretty happy with the final result."

Reader FXPosé
THE PLACE TO SHARE YOUR DIGITAL ART

Rafael Gomes Amarante
LOCATION: Brazil
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EMAIL: rgamarante2@gmail.com
MEDIA: Cinema 4D, ZBrush, Photoshop, 3ds Max

Most of Rafael's work begins not in paper or even Photoshop, but in 3D software. For modelling, the São Paulo-based artist uses Cinema 4D and ZBrush which, along with Photoshop, he also uses for texturing purposes.

The freelance concept and 3D artist says. "I love projects with a lot of creative freedom, although futuristic and sci-fi elements inspire me the most."

1 **SECRET SQUADRON** "This is a team of secret soldiers – reinforcements from the future. I created the image using Cinema 4D and Photoshop."

2 **ROBOTS** "Here's one member of a unit of repair robots. They may not look like much, but they'll get the job done, and on time."

3 **R4** "Part of an elite robot squad. I like working on projects featuring robots and mechanical designs, inspired by the universe and sci-fi themes."

🇬🇧 **Jonny Taylor**
LOCATION: Northern Ireland
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EMAIL: jonny_marvel@yahoo.co.uk
MEDIA: Photoshop

Jonny spent two years studying art and design. He began painting digitally because he prefers the level of detail he can achieve with the media. The Northern Irish artist has a number of influences: he likes James Jean's work on the comic Fables, Jo Chen's playful style, and with his college tutor Liz Upritchard he shares an obsession with fish and all things aquatic.

"I'm continually trying to improve and develop my style," Jonny says. "I love painting life with a bit of fantasy, adding fantastical elements as if they're a normal part of the image's world and so deserve to have their own stories."

1 ROB AND I "This is my first digital self-portrait. With my earphones in, transfixed on the screen and with few little distractions – not even a giant robot called Rob. Because it was my first digital self-portrait it seemed fitting to put my first ever digital painting on the wall behind me."

2 HAPPY ABANDONMENT "I decided to twist the idea of abandonment and make it more of a happy situation. A battle-beaten woman crashes on a remote planet. After many years of war and fighting she decides to live the rest of her life in solitude, turning her broken ship into her new home."

Reader FXPosé
THE PLACE TO SHARE YOUR DIGITAL ART
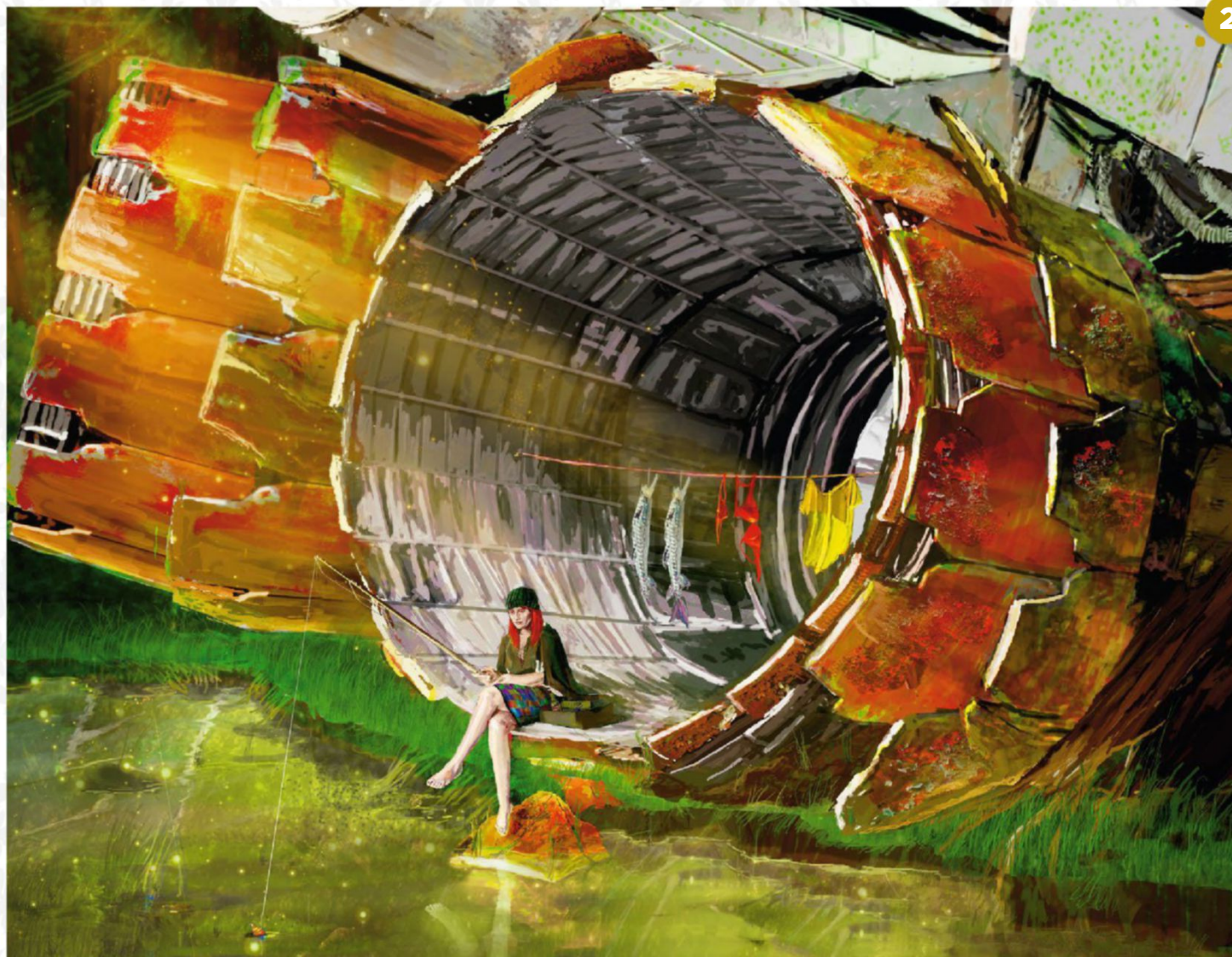
Kevin McGivern

LOCATION: Scotland
WEB: www.kevinmcgivern.com
EMAIL: info@kevinmcgivern.com
MEDIA: Photoshop

"I love the convenience that digital art brings," Kevin says, "but I also love the look and feel of traditional painting. So every day I'm working to give my digital work more of a traditional look." The Glasgow-based freelance artist and illustrator adds to that aesthetic his love of modern life and sport, painting portraits to commission and illustrations for games, movies, magazines and advertising campaigns.

"I always paint people and things pop-culture related," Kevin adds. "I also have a mild addiction to coffee and an unhealthy compulsion to watch any sport or tattoo-based show on TV."

1 SALTIRE "This is a main character and superhero from a new Scottish comic of the same name. That's Edinburgh in the background."

2 GARETH KEENAN "This was one of the painting I did in a series based on the characters from the UK version of The Office. In each of the paintings there are little Easter eggs that only fans of the show would pick up."

3 ARES AND APRODITE "After living in Greece for eight years, I've always wanted to paint Greek mythology-inspired art. The contest ran by Jon Schindehette at The Art Order was the perfect opportunity. This painting depicts Greek Gods Ares and Aphrodite and their forbidden love."

4 CLOWN BABY "I painted this for an online contest, in which we were asked to paint our biggest fear. What's more scary than an evil clown baby?"

IMAGINEFX CRIT
"A heroic barbarian, a great depiction of a cult TV character, a pair of Greek gods, and… man alive, that's one creepy babba! Although her expression is almost enough to make you want to pick her up for a cuddle. Almost."
Beren Neale,
Digital Editor

🇨🇦 Rockey Chen

LOCATION: Canada
WEB: http://ifxm.ag/r-chen
EMAIL: rockeychendesign@gmail.com
MEDIA: Photoshop

Rockey's work imagines worlds full of heroes and villains, good and evil. The Canadian artist and designer studied at British Columbia's Emily Carr University of Art + Design, before moving on to vocational training at FZD School of Design in Singapore.

"These experiences," Rockey says, "convinced me we're all able to take action to influence the world for generations to come. As an artist, I can only draw, paint and write blurbs. I hope, however, that my images catch people's eyes, and encourage them to do only good in this world."

1 **AFRIKA KORPS AND THE LIBYAN LOCALS** "I wanted to show a different side of World War II. Here, the military personnels interact with the locals to learn about the region. Be they famous, infamous, or simply lost in time and history, soldiers of the past wars are individuals, not unlike ourselves."

2 **CELEBRATION FOR RECONCILIATION AND WORLD PEACE** "I was inspired by the boardgame Axis & Allies, and set the image between the first and second World Wars. I imagined a scenario where leaders from prominent nations around the globe mingled and exchanged pleasantries. Yet behind the cheerful façade, this crowd of powerful individuals forge alliances or plot against one another."

3 **IN THE SKIES ABOVE GOMORRAH** "This piece came from researching the B-17 Flying Fortress aircraft and the strategic bombing campaigns in Europe. In my mind, I pictured the moon peeking over giant lumps of steel in the sky amid deafening flak explosions."

SUBMIT YOUR ART TO FXPOSÉ

Send up to five pieces of your work, along with their titles, an explanation of your techniques, a photo of yourself and contact details. Images should be sent as 300DPI JPEG files.

Email: fxpose@imaginefx.com (maximum 1MB per image)

Post: (CD or DVD):
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ImagineFX
Quay House
The Ambury
Bath, BA1 2BW, UK

All artwork is submitted on the basis of a non-exclusive worldwide licence to publish, both in print and electronically.
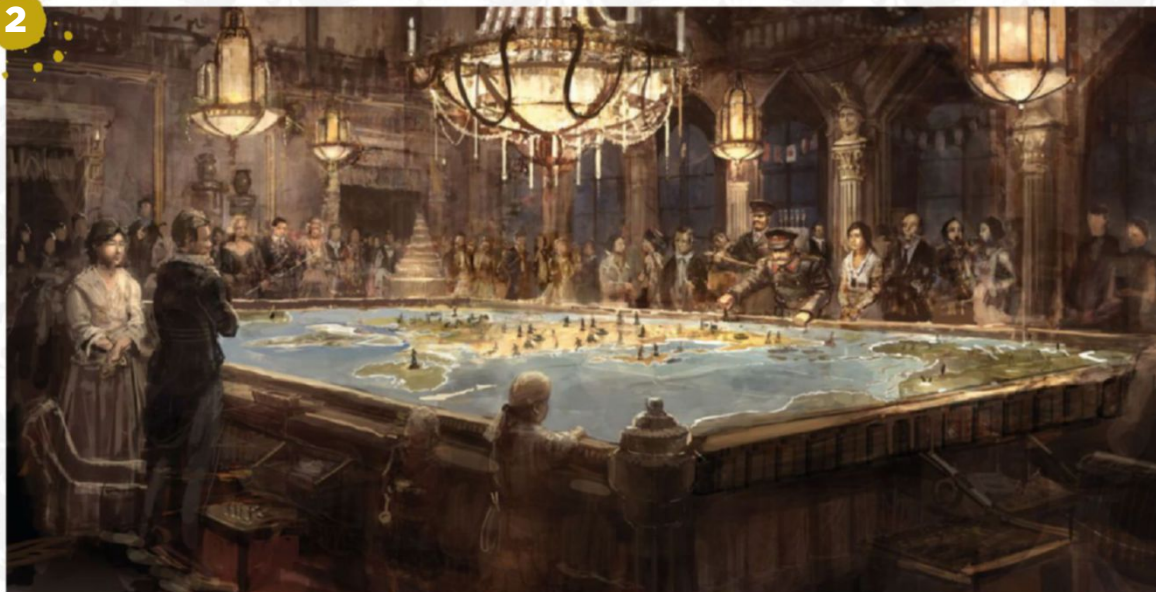
1

IMAGINEFX CRIT

"Rockey has a talent for creating compositions that look like they're taken from a film. I can almost hear the sounds of braying camels, whispered intrigue around the table and deafening explosions in the sky. Very cinematic."
Claire Howlett,
Editor

2

How to make 2015 your best year yet

New start From finding your audience to learning what art directors really want: we ask the experts how you can hit new heights with your art this coming year…

MAR

S M T W T F S

Find an audience

Noah Bradley says there are just two things you need to do to have a successful career in concept art and illustration: "You have to make amazing work. And then you have to show it to people. A lot of focus is put on the former, but many forget about the latter." The US artist, whose online Art Camp promises to "show you how to be a better artist," has the following advice for finding your audience: "Put out your work on every social media site you can imagine. Every art website. You never know who's going to see your work and where they're gonna see it. Stop browsing content, and put out some content of your own."

Sign up to Noah's Art Camp by visiting **www.artcamp.com**.

A shadowy figure stalks the land in Noah's artwork, which can be seen on a number of sites.

Helen Rusovich was one of 82 artists who contributed to the Substrata project.

JAN/FEB

S M T W T F S

Start that personal project

Vigil Games, the team behind the Darksiders franchise, closed suddenly in 2013. But former employee Paul Richards had an idea: the concept artist wanted the old Vigil team to create an ambitious new video game, Substrata. They knew the game would never be released, so they did it for fun, and Paul encourages you to do the same.

"The world is replete with beauty and works of art that reflect it. And, still, something is missing. Something you'd die to have, but which, until this glorious moment, you've always been deprived of. Your unconscious self has always known what that is. Satiate it, and let the rest be damned. Don't make something so casual as a "project." Make an imperative. If you don't scratch this itch, who will?"

See more of the rich art of Substrata at **www.autodestruct.com/substrata.htm**.

The art of Substrata was released in the summer of 2014.

❝ Don't make something so casual as a 'project.' If you don't scratch this itch, who will? ❞

APR

Try something new

Back in 2007, Mark Roosien tried SketchUp. The Dutchman was so impressed with the 3D modelling software, he jumped full-time from traditional to digital media and built a successful career as a freelance concept artist. "A good friend of mine persuaded me to give SketchUp a try," he says, "and I've been in love with the program ever since. It truly helped me develop my skills. Try it out yourself in 2015 and discover how it will aid your development as an artist. SketchUp will help you in your traditional work, for example, by setting up perspectives in record time. More importantly, though, it'll provide you with an entirely new, fresh-smelling 3D canvas. Explore new possibilities."

You can download a free version of SketchUp from **www.sketchup.com**.

An example of Mark Roosien's SketchUp art. The program convinced him to turn digital.

MAY/JUN

Improve your self-promo

You've created cool art. You've found an audience. How do you build on that? Thomas Babbey advises sharing WIPs as well as finished pieces: "It helps people notice your work online," the US artist says. "Art enthusiasts like to see what's behind the curtain. Showing them your process can help make a connection with followers who are looking to achieve the same results you achieve."

Thomas teaches at and helps promotes Watts Atelier of the Arts in California. "Going beyond internet and social media, I'd recommend attending conventions, both as an exhibitor and an attendee. You'll get to know the people working in your industry, and they'll get to know you. Art directors are always looking at the calibre of your work, but they also want to get to know you as a person. They need to know if you're someone they click with, and someone who seems consistent and reliable."

Learn more about what art courses Watts organises at **www.wattsatelier.com**.

JUL

Make the most of cons

Andre Luis hosted the first Trojan Horse Was A Unicorn in 2013, and made a loss of some €500,000. Yet the convention for artists of every discipline returned in 2014 – bigger, better and with a reputation as one of the best new art events in the world.

This year, Andre, promises that it'll be better still. The artist has the following advice on making the most of your time at conventions: "Ask questions," he says. "Find your favourite artists and ask, 'How do you...?' Events are all about networking. So take your iPad so you can show companies and fellow artists what you can do. Don't be shy. Talk to everyone, invite everyone for drinks and, most importantly, have fun!"

To find out more about Trojan Horse and book tickets visit **www.trojan-unicorn.com**. ➜➜

TROJAN HORSE WAS A UNICORN

Trojan Horse limits its number of attendees to the low hundreds.

Watts Atelier teacher Thomas Babbey's traditional work explores, "Art, wildlife and fantasy."

AUG/SEP

S M T W T F S

Target art directors

"What art directors really want," Lauren Panepinto says, "is for you to put yourself in our shoes. Make it easy for us to find and commission you. Take a look at your web presence: is your work easy to find on a dedicated site or is it buried in a blog format or community site like deviantART?"

Lauren is creative director at sci-fi and fantasy book publisher Orbit. She wants to see more sites she can simply navigate, with as few clicks as possible to access portfolio pieces. Once there, she wants to see your best work – and lots of it. "Make sure we can easily download images from your site to our files so we can route them for review in-house. Put subtle watermarks on the bottom of your images so we always know whose piece is whose. Also, make sure your email is on your site, not behind a contact form. Artists would be horrified to know how many commissions they miss because of these roadblocks."

See Orbit's catalogue at **www.orbitbooks.net**.

Mélanie Delon's art from one of Orbit's publications.

Dan Dos Santos painted this cover for Orbit, using another artist, Marc Scheff, as a model.
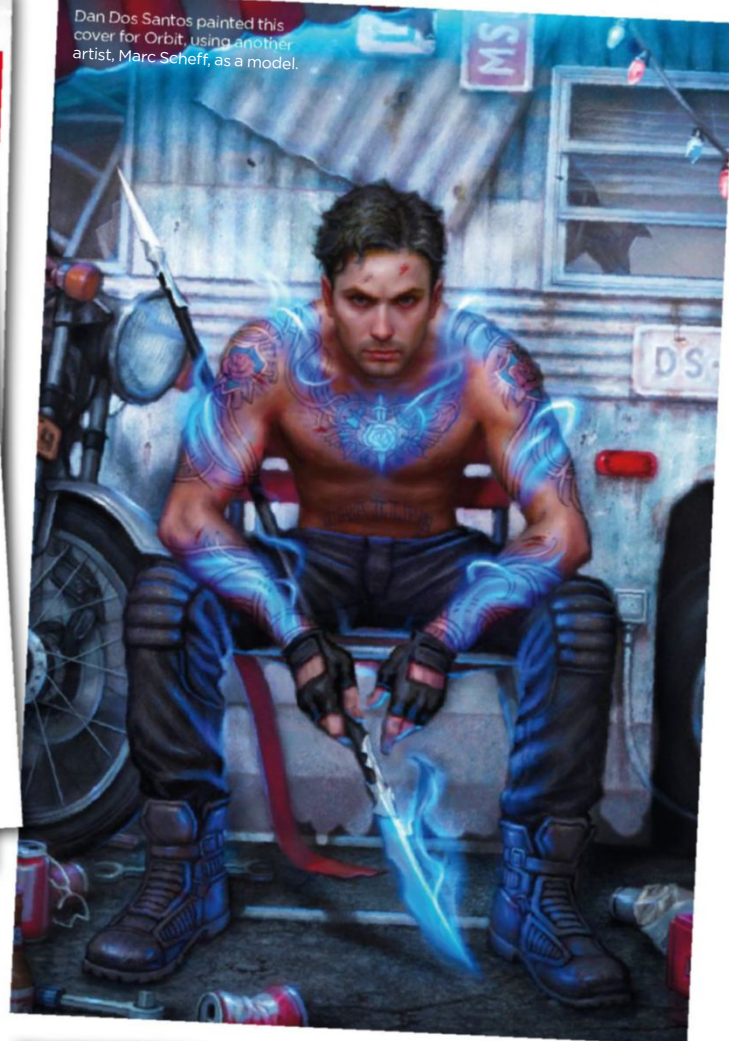
> ❝ Put yourself in the shoes of art directors, and make it easy for us to find and commission you ❞

OCT/NOV

S M T W T F S

Land your dream job

In just four years, comic book artist Mikael Bergkvist went from barely being able to afford materials, to collaborating on a sold-out comic with iconic artist Neal Adams. "You meet people by calling them and specifically asking to meet," the Swede says. "Tell them why you want to meet. Be polite, respectful and direct."

Mikael says it's important to know who you're talking to and what they're looking for. "Neal doesn't have a standard portfolio. He never did. He creates a targeted portfolio, specifically for the job that he wants,. You show them the willingness to collaborate if you target your material for them from the start. If you're turned down, take it gracefully, because they might need someone like you later, and then they will remember that you exist."

Mikael's work is at **www.deadlinecomics.com**.

DEC

S M T W T F S

Carve out your own niche

Tom Hodge, better known as the Dude Designs, is a digital artist who loves traditional B-movie art. He's carved out a career combining the two: "You find a niche by doing what you love," he says, "finding what truly inspires you and following that passion - passion is what will get you through, passion and putting your neck on the block. Give your work some individuality and character, also attention to detail."
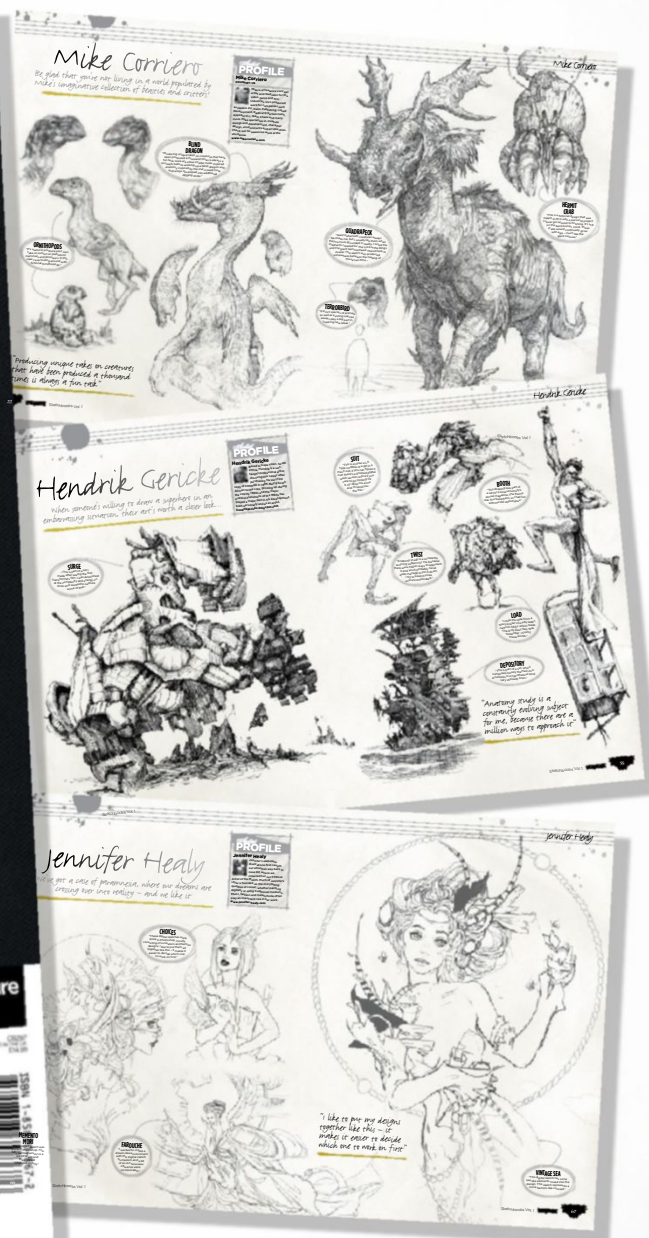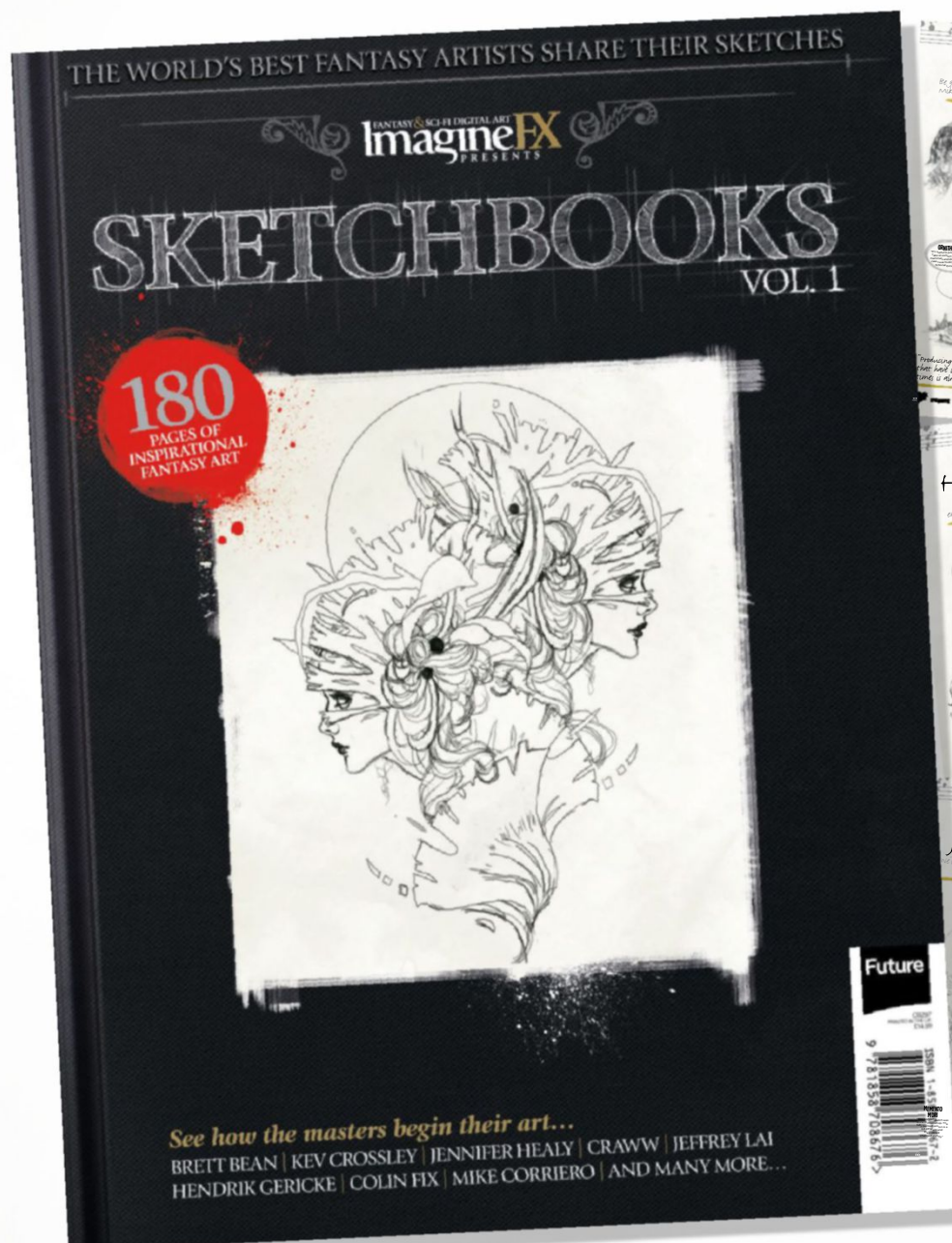
Tom says it wasn't easy getting where he is now, creating poster for the likes of 20th Century Fox, but it's worth it. "Lots of sacrifices will need to be made, so respect yourself and charge a fair rate. You wouldn't get accountants working for free, so why should you?"

You can see more from the Dude at **www.thedudedesigns.com**.

Magnificent book of monsters

Creatively creepy Two illustrators combine their talents to bring together a book of the cutest, kookiest, creepiest monsters around

"Emily and I have enjoyed drawing monsters since we were little, and they remain a recurring theme in our personal work to this day," explains illustrator Matt Dixon, who along with Emily Hare has created a collection of monster artworks.

Coming in at 44 pages of full colour, with a matt laminated cover, Monsters covers every kind of monster, from the creepy to the quirky and the adorable to the down-right absurd. "When we realised that we had a shared love of beastly things, the idea of collaborating on a monster-themed project seemed very natural," Matt says.

As freelance illustrators the pair are used to painting in isolation; however, being able to share the creative process with someone else was one of the most rewarding parts of the process, "It was great to be able to chat about new ideas - something Emily is rarely short of!" says Matt. Some monsters were created individually, and for others, the pair would swap sketches and paint over each other's lines.

But what is it about monsters that made them want to create the book? "I often catch myself hunched over my Cintiq with a big grin on my face, and realise that the four year old who drew on my mum's walls with crayons is alive and well inside my grey-haired, 40-something body," says Matt. "For both of us, I think monsters are a connection to our very earliest memories of drawing and painting during childhood, where the only motivation was to have fun. They're a great reminder of why we do what we do."

The book is out now. You can buy it online from Emily at **www.wavingmonster.com** or from Matt at **www.mattdixon.co.uk**.

Jeremy (below) would spend hours chasing butterflies, given half the chance.

Matt and Emily created Cliff to rock on!

ARTIST IN RESIDENCE

Jose Ivan Negron

Fighting back Two years after the Brooklyn-based cartoonist lost everything, he's back in business

Two years ago, my wife and I lost everything we owned during Hurricane Sandy. This is my workstation after two years of rebuilding.

My studio is in the living room of our apartment in Brooklyn, New York: the workstation is centred on a three-piece corner desk. I do my artwork on 9x12 inch bond paper, and the digital colours on a 24-inch touchscreen monitor connected to a HP desktop and a Huion tablet. Because the area where the graphics tablet and 24-inch monitor sit is where I do all my line art, I keep a lot of photo reference on that computer for when I need it.

I also work a regular day job at my station, so I try to make it as pleasant as possible. I've surrounded myself with things that I enjoy looking at: toys, books, art by artists I like, movie posters and my video game, Blu-ray and DVD collection.

I normally do artwork after I finish working my day job, around 8pm. I find it much easier to work at night, after the business and interruptions of the day are done. I work about five hours a night and wind down by watching something on Netflix or playing a video game before heading off to sleep.

I also like to listen to podcasts or music on iTunes, or have a movie or TV show playing on the bigger 32-inch screen while I'm working on commissions. An artist's life can be very solitary and it's nice to have something going on in the background, so as not to feel alone all the time. Not bad after two years, eh?

Jose is a cartoonist who lives in Brooklyn, New York with his wife, Rebecca and their cat, Shmucky. You can see his collection of art at www.jin-works.deviantart.com.

Ever since I was a kid, I've been a huge fan of the Universal Monster movies, Creature From The Black Lagoon being my favourite one. The underwater scenes rock!

This shelf houses my book collection, some figures and statues, and the various papers I like to work on.

My desk is where I do all my artwork. I normally draw everything on 9x12-inch drawing paper, before scanning and colouring it in Photoshop. I do like to work traditionally, but commission work is always completed digitally. It's what clients expect when they hire me.

This large-size printer-scanner survived Hurricane Sandy by falling on top of a pile of rubble just above the waterline created by the flood. At the time, I had put it away on top of a bookcase. That, I believe, is what we call serendipity.

I keep a ton of reference photos on this computer for when I find myself in a bit of a bind with a pose or prop.

Yes folks, I consider iTunes an art tool. I store my music collection and movies within arm's reach, it's where I watch Netflix and Hulu while working, and where I play video games and watch films to unwind.

This is the nerve centre of my studio. The movies, music and video games here keep everything moving along. Without this collection of kit, nothing happens.

So this awesome little dude is our cat Schmucky. We like to joke that it's his apartment and we're just allowed to live with him. He's a gracious host.

Letters

YOUR FEEDBACK & OPINIONS

Contact the editor, Claire Howlett, on **claire@imaginefx.com** or write to ImagineFX, Future plc, Quay House, The Ambury, Bath, BA1 1UA, England

Follow us on twitter:
www.twitter.com/imaginefx

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www.facebook.com/imaginefx

New binder, please!

I've completed my first year's subscription with ImagineFX and it has been a wonderful experience so far. I had purchased the magazine binder with the artwork of Jason Chan on it. I'm going to start my second year of the magazine and I would like to order another binder that doesn't feature the same artwork. Will ImagineFX be printing another binder with artwork by another artist? Your response will be highly appreciated because I'm not interested in purchasing the same binder. Thank you.
Francis Lee, via email

Claire replies Hello Francis. Thank you for your interest in the binder. We probably won't be changing the artwork until the summer time of 2015. Apologies for this. For other readers interested in the binder with Jason Chan's artwork on it, see page 38 for more information.

A welcome energy boost

I'm a senior student in an art academy in Singapore, struggling to improve my design and animation skills. Recently I lost the energy to paint or animate, because I felt my work wasn't up to standard. However, when I chanced upon your October 2014 cover art by Pramin Phatiphong, I was deeply impressed. It was my first experience of ImagineFX magazine and it's inspiring to read the stories of struggling artists, expert tips and much more. Thank you ImagineFX – please continue to publish more awesome tips!
Qi Jun, Singapore

Claire replies Hello Qi! I'm very happy that you've finally found us! We always endeavour to give awesome tips and inspiration to readers. I forwarded on your comments to Pramin and he was greatly

You'll find Jason Chan's fantastic art on ImagineFX's binders until the summer of 2015.

DID YOU MISS ISSUE 117?
Visit our shop at **http://ifxm.ag/ifxstore** for details on this edition and other special offers, too.

Qi Jun was feeling uninspired… until he discovered ImagineFX and Pramin Phatiphong's art in issue 113.

touched to know that his art has inspired you to strive on as an artist.

Embrace online art forums

I read Michael's letter (Digital Avenues) in issue 117 and realised that I could perhaps suggest something useful. He says that he lives in a small place with no one to share his digital art passions with, but there's an easy solution! There are several online forums where one can upload sketches and exercises. The most popular include the Sycra forum, ConceptArt.org forum, Crimson Daggers, Permanoobs… and I'm sure there are more!

I'm trying out Sycra's at the moment and I've already got lots of recommendations for YouTube channels to follow, pointers and critiques. Everyone was very welcoming and I doubt anyone cares at all about anyone's age on there!

And while on to the age topic, which he mentions and tends to pop up every now and then, Van Gogh apparently started painting when he was 28 (which, for the time, was pretty late). I heard that Brad Rigney started in his 30s and he's a great artist who works for Wizards of The Coast. I also found a story of a guy who landed a gig with Hasbro when he was 40 or so, after 15 years in the police!

I'd particularly recommend Sycra's videos on the subject (I'm not his PR agent, I promise, but I did find them enormously motivating!) on YouTube. They're free and very easy to follow.
Teresa, via email

Claire replies Thank you Teresa. What a well-thought out response! Hopefully Michael and perhaps some other readers will realise that they're not alone and that there are many like-minded people out there online. I have found the art community to be one of the most friendliest and giving communities there is. It's certainly well worth getting involved.

FRESH PAINT

Your art news that's grabbed our attention

SimonWrightArt (@SimonWrightArt)

"Uninvited Guest Painted in @Photoshop @ImagineFX #horror #ghost"
ifxm.ag/fresh_simon

Paul Abrams (@PaulAbramsArt)

"Lady Arcane @imaginefx"
ifxm.ag/fresh_paul

Gareth Davies (@Spudonkey)

"Quick study #conceptart"
ifxm.ag/fresh_gareth

Just finished something you want us to shout about? Send it our way on Twitter (@imaginefx), or find us on Facebook!

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Artist Q&A

GOT A QUESTION FOR OUR EXPERTS? LET US EASE YOUR ART-ACHE AT **HELP@IMAGINEFX.COM**

GET YOUR RESOURCES
See page 6 now!

The ImagineFX panel
NO.1 FOR DIGITAL ARTISTS

John Petersen
An education in biological and pre-medical illustration led US-based John to become an animator and designer at Engineering Systems, Inc. He's also a freelance illustrator.
www.petersenart.com

Paco Rico Torres
Freelance illustrator Paco lives in Spain, and has produced sci-fi and fantasy art for several card games, magazines, books and role-playing games.
www.pacorico.blogspot.co.uk

Jonathan Standing
Jonathan is an illustrator and concept artist. He paints environments and characters, and generates visual effects sequences for Syfy's popular series Defiance.
www.jonathanstanding.tumblr.com

Mark Molnar
Mark is a concept and visual development artist who works for the entertainment industry, creating illustrations for international film, game and animation companies.
www.markmolnar.com

Tony Foti
Tony is a freelance illustrator who regularly contributes to Dungeons & Dragons and Fantasy Flight Games' best-selling Star Wars and Lord of the Rings lines.
www.tonyfotiart.com

Artist Q&A
Need our advice?
Email **help@imaginefx.com** with your art questions and we'll provide all the answers!

Question
How should I go about painting an atomic explosion?
Julie Ballhaus, England

Answer
John replies

There are a million ways to go about this. You have to first think about what you want to communicate, which will inform your composition and where you want to place your camera. You could set it at street or rooftop level, or choose an aerial view. You could make a detailed drawing with pencils, or knock out a speed painting with compound brushes.

It's an atomic explosion, so the viewer will expect to see the mushroom cloud in the distance. It's ripping through a city, so we're going to need a good view of all that destruction. I've chosen a view from just over the rooftops of low buildings, with some skyscrapers in the distance. The entire piece will have an overall warm colour palette, with bright fire from the explosion throwing high-contrast light and shadows

Growing up during the Cold War provided me with plenty of nuclear armageddon nightmares, but for this I still referred to photos of mushroom clouds.

on the whole environment. An atomic explosion means absolute destruction, so we'll need a lot of debris. Photoshop has highly customisable Scatter brushes, so I use them liberally. I add lots of flying objects – cars, glass and chunks of concrete.

Artist's secret
ADJUSTMENT LAYERS ARE YOUR FRIEND
I use Color Balance and Gradient Overlay adjustment layers frequently. They're excellent for unifying a colour theme or adding a complementary hue to either light or dark values. They're non-destructive and can be masked, so they're easy to control.

Step-by-step:
Rain hellfire and destruction on a city

1 I start by using a broad cloud brush to fill in the entire composition with oranges and whites, making a fire-filled atmosphere. I add two layers and paint the silhouettes of buildings, trying to balance the composition. The mushroom cloud will be in the left half of the image, so I add the heavier skyscraper shapes to the right.

2 With a Polygonal Lasso tool, I select shapes for the low rooftops, keeping in mind the vanishing point and horizon. With a broad brush I paint light values in the selection, establishing the flat surfaces reflecting the explosion. I add detail to the skyscrapers, using a repeating brush to suggest separate floors and balconies.

3 With a variety of Scatter brushes, I paint in tons of flying debris on a separate layer. I then apply a Radial Zoom Blur filter to give the debris energy and motion radiating from the explosion. Using my cloud brush, I darken the sky where the mushroom cloud will be. This will add contrast to the giant fireball.

Question
I want to paint someone trapped in a bubble, but don't know where to start. Help!
Karl Henning, US

Since the surface of the bubble is mostly transparent, use highlights and reflections to create a feeling of depth.

The thicker and more opaque the skin of the bubble is, the softer edges will be on anything inside.

Answer
Tony replies

There are a lot of ways for a character to become captured in a story, but in most epic science fiction or fantasy sagas at least one person ends up in a bubble. It could be an indestructible diamond sphere, a rubbery balloon bouncing across the hills, or just a very resilient soap bubble. Every material has its own set of properties, although each version will most likely be at least clear. Whenever you're painting something that's transparent, the main idea is to focus on the highlights and outline.

If you think about your line of sight from a bird's eye view, you'll notice that it goes through the least amount of material when aimed directly through the centre of the bubble. Ergo, the sides will be more opaque as the sphere turns away from the viewer (creating an outline of sorts). Even if the character inside is bending their prison into something other than a sphere, just remember that the more perpendicular a surface is to the viewer, the less visible it will be.

I suggest putting the outline on one layer and then creating two separate layers for the front and back of the main surface. This enables you to manipulate their transparency. Place whoever or whatever is trapped on layers between those two and you'll have complete control over how opaque the bubble is. Then paint in the highlights, keeping in mind that the more shiny the surface is, the more hard-edged the reflections will be.

Artist's secret
COLOUR COORDINATING

Avoid using hues that are complementary to a translucent surface's colour in any object that's behind it, because the resulting mix will be something more dull. Placing a bright green jacket behind red cellophane, for instance, will just make it look grey.

Question
I've seen lots of mechs from the outside, but how should I paint the view from the cockpit?
Damon Ellis, England

Answer
John replies

Let's say we were piloting a mech. What sort of information would we want to see on our heads-up display (HUD)? We probably want an ammunition indicator (for all our various types of weapons), a compass, a mech body damage indicator, engine temperature monitor (like a 'life' bar), and of course a targeting system. We also need some sort of colour-coded threat indicator that identifies enemies as red and allies as blue/green.

We need to start with a background, with objects and enemies to target, right? A war-blasted wasteland will make a nice backdrop to which we can add soldiers and vehicles. For the view from inside the mech, we need a suggestion of a cockpit window. You want it to be there, but not so intrusive that it blocks your view. In this example I give it a slight blur to produce a nice depth of field. You want to show in

Coalition Gunship
Do not engage

Temp. var

Personell, Infantry, Armed
Automatic HE rifles
Fragmentation grenades

Priority Threat
Vehicle, Ground, Armored

12   NE   E   SE   S   1337

Here we have our battle scene with all the information organised neatly in our HUD. Enemies are red, allies and function/aiming indicators are blue.

I have a separate Illustrator document open in tandem with my Photoshop file. This enables me to make quick vector shapes that I can use later.

the window framework whether your mech is made of rounded, organic shapes or hard geometric shapes.

This is a HUD, so there also needs to be some suggestion that this is a monitor display. Adding a subtle scanline effect to the entire window accomplishes this nicely. Now you can go nuts with shapes, crosshairs, brackets and so on. Just experiment to see what fits the style.

Pay attention to current trends in UI design. Lately, everything has been moving towards simple, readable typefaces and flat shading, but that doesn't mean you can't play around. This is a battle mech, so we want lots of scientific and tactical-sounding text in view.

Artist's secret
CREATE A SCANLINE EFFECT
Create a new Photoshop file with a blank background, 10x10 pixels. Fill the top half with black. Then select All, and go to Edit>Define Pattern... Then fill a blank layer in your working file with that pattern.

Question
I'm inspired to use insects in my sci-fi art. What's my next step?
Nigel Fellnar, Canada

VIDEO WORKSHOP

Consider adding elements to your scene that will display more aspects of the design, such as scale and any special features the vehicle may have.

Answer
Tony replies

Whether it's the Reapers from Mass Effect, Invid from Robotech or the aptly named Starbug from Red Dwarf, insects (and pretty much every type of animal with an exoskeleton) have been inspiring science fiction spaceships since the genre took off. The complex designs of Nature are deeper and more thoughtful than most of us could hope to create on our best day, so it's a good starting point for all kinds of stuff.

As with anything you create, the first thing you need to do is figure out what

questions need to be asked. Whose spacecraft is this? Are they human-sized? What's the general demeanour of their race, and what sort of mission are they on? Or are they lost? Friendly or hostile? Is this their ship or did they steal it? The more of these kinds of questions you can answer, the more streamlined and focused your design will become. Just picking your favourite bits from a series of strange bugs can have an eccentric charm of its own, but only when you design with a strong narrative in mind will the message come across clearly.

Question

Can you help me paint light coming through venetian blinds?

Jean-Pierre Dreyfus, Canada

Answer
Mark replies

Keep in mind the basic physics of how light operates. If the light source isn't immediately in front of the window (say, the sun), you'll barely notice any distortion in the parallels of the light beams. On a surface that's perpendicular to the blinds, the light and shadows will follow the direction of the light, much like on the back wall in this illustration. On surfaces that are parallel with the window, the light and shadows will also be parallel as they fall across the character's face and body.

Remember that the light will follow any changes of the surfaces and that's exactly why you can use it to describe form. You can also suggest the variation of materials by carefully addressing the edges of the lights. Here I've blurred the light shafts that appear behind the character on the smoke in the room.

I first paint the character with a generic light source coming from the upper left of the scene, and then darken her whole body to suggest that she's in complete shadow. Then I paint the light shafts on a separate Color Dodge layer and distort each one to match the affected surfaces, erasing back all the areas that aren't facing the window. This gives me a solid base for the lighting in the room, which I only have to fine-tune during the detailing phase.

I want to show this iconic Star Wars character in a mundane setting with just a hint of sci-fi about it.

The light and shadows will always follow the surfaces in their paths, and you can use this to describe shapes in an underlit environment more clearly.

Step-by-step: From bug to buggy
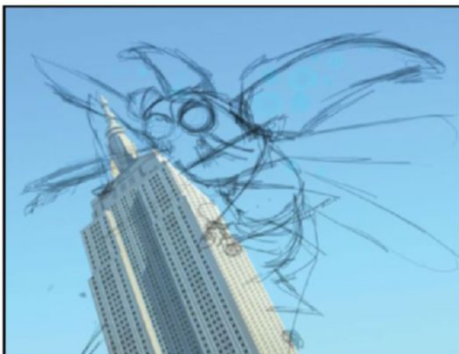
1 Use the answers to your questions to create a theme for your design. In this case I want it to be an exploration ship, so my primary focus is mobility. The wings of a pine beetle, dragonfly tails and the segmentation of a beetle fly help give this vehicle a more all-terrain feeling.

2 To avoid making a ship that could be mistaken for an actual insect, use your animal reference to lay out the initial shapes and then look to jet fighters, Mars rovers and other artificial craft as you flesh out the components, to introduce that unnatural, this-was-built-not-grown touch.
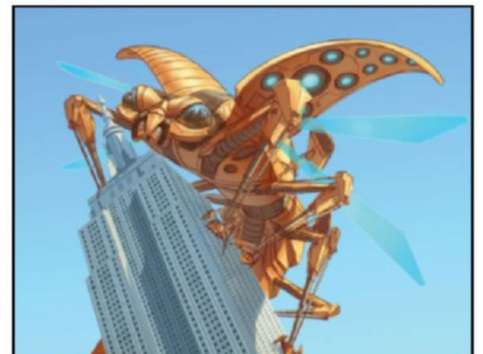
3 When figuring out the details, avoid making the entire ship too complex. If every square inch is exploding with information, the effect is like TV static, and it all just blends together. Conversely, if the whole ship is just one generic shape, there isn't much to entertain the viewer with.

ImagineNation Artist Q&A

Question
I want to paint molten glass – any advice?
Daryl Jones, Australia

Answer
Paco replies

Molten glass is hot – very hot! And when something gets that hot, it glows. Molten glass is a source of light, and most of the time it should be painted like any other source of light. If you want to paint a pool of molten glass (inside a mould, for example), it won't be all that different from molten metal or lava and will be a source of a yellow or orange glow.

The peculiarities of molten glass only become apparent when you try to paint a small quantity of it (such as a bubble of molten glass at the end of a blowpipe) or when it starts to grow cold. Unlike molten metal, glass is transparent and shiny, so when it starts to cool it'll reflect light, and so specular highlights will be seen on its surface. (The colder the glass, the less it glows.) And if it's a thin layer of molten glass you should be able to see through it.

So before choosing how to paint molten glass you should consider its temperature – the amount of light that molten glass can radiate is related to temperature – and the amount of glass on show.

To paint molten glass, note these three factors: it glows (according to its temperature), it's transparent, and it can reflect light.

If something glows with an orange light, nearby objects should be orange-tinged too,

Artist's secret
SOFT LIGHT LAYER
A good way to enhance the intensity of the glow is to paint a blurry orange area on a layer over the molten glass and then set it to Soft Light mode. Reduce the layer Opacity to suit.

Step-by-step: Paint a glass bubble

1 First I create a round selection, then paint inside it using a collection of warm colours such as dark red, orange and warm yellow. I blend the colours together from the darkest to the brightest. I assume that the parts touching the blowpipe should be the coldest ones, so the dark tones are going to be on the bottom part of the circle, nearest the blowpipe.

2 Using the Warp command in Photoshop (Edit>Transform>Warp), I transform the circle into something that's shaped like a light bulb, but it could have any shape you think it should have. After all, it's molten, so this glass is pretty much shapeless. I choose this shape because my dwarf character is creating ornamental glass, but as I say, it's up to you.

3 Next, I start to integrate the glass into the image. First I paint the lighting in the scene, which will be affected by the glow of the molten glass. If you don't do this correctly then the whole image will be a failure. Elements that are close to the glowing glass should be more affected by its light. I also carefully depict the area of contact between the glass bubble and the blowpipe.

4 Finally, I start to paint the transparency of the glass, bearing in mind that the cooler areas are the most transparent. The end of the blowpipe is now visible through the glass, and the strong light from the left is visible on the bottom right-hand side of the bubble. A specular highlight on the left side of the bubble makes it look like a real bubble of molten glass.

Question
Please help me paint a fleet of spaceships quickly
Harriett Girard, Canada

VIDEO WORKSHOP

Here are the designs in context. There are not quite enough to constitute a fleet yet, but they make a reasonably convincing squadron.

Answer
Jonathan replies

I approach the process of design by building a library of modular shapes. I generate a base ship design, ensuring that it has a relatively simple silhouette. This enables me to change it significantly by adding additional shapes and pieces. By creating these modular pieces – wings, engines, cockpits, guns and so on – on separate layers, it's easy to place them in different locations on the design, skew them, change their size or orientation and basically experiment in ways to make the ship design significantly different.

Silhouette is what the eye always reads first. By ensuring you make sufficient changes to the silhouettes of your ships (rather than internal detail), you can maximise the differences between each instance of the design. I try to further the variety of the designs by adding different colour schemes and paint jobs to each ship; this idea could be pushed even further by introducing different textures as well as colours and shapes.
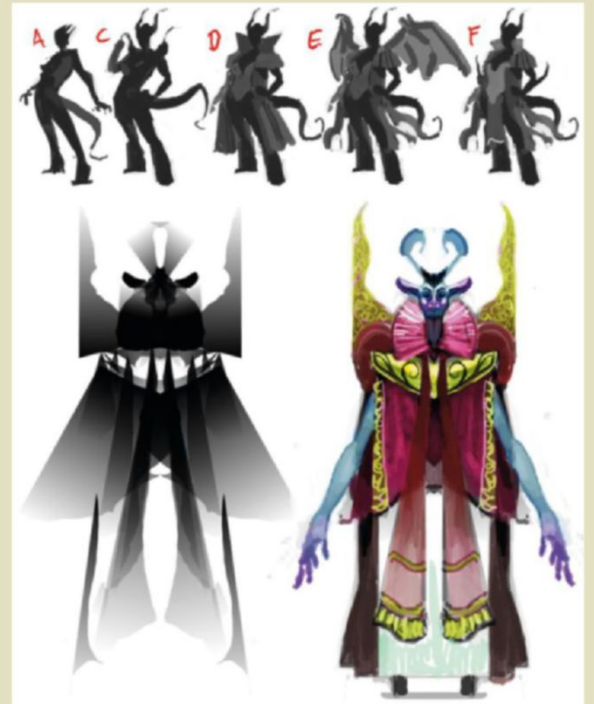
Here are four designs that I generated from one ship, and three additional pieces that I've cobbled together in different ways.

Question
How can I quickly generate a range of character silhouettes?
Leanne Ashington, England

Above, variations of a silhouette that were painted quickly. Below, random shapes generated using Alchemy are developed into a character sketch.

Answer
Paco replies

Coming up with interesting silhouettes isn't easy, although painting them is, and that's the interesting thing about them. When painting a silhouette, you don't need to paint details – hands or clothes, say – you just need to focus on the general shape of the character. This means you can rapidly produce dozens of them. So, the key isn't painting one interesting silhouette straight from your imagination, but rather to paint a collection of them quickly. Statistically speaking, this should ensure that you'll end up painting a bunch of interesting ones that you can develop into a character design.

My approach is to paint the first thing that comes into my head, then copy the silhouette and add more elements or erase some. I repeat the process, trying to come up with different things, and once I have collection of silhouettes, I place them alongside each other and choose the best one.

Another method is to put down random brushstrokes until you see something interesting, using programs such as Alchemy. This approach can generate a varied range of random shapes. You have to remember that there are no magic shortcuts for creating a character, but my two methods can make character creation a lot easier.

Alchemy is particularly useful when you're stuck for ideas. As you start generating random shapes, lots of interesting concepts come to mind.

VIDEO WORKSHOP

Question
What's a good way of depicting light shining through a tree canopy?
Brad O'Leary, US

Answer
Jonathan replies

You need an area of negative space in your image for the dappled light to play. If your composition is very busy, it's hard for this lighting effect to be a focal point. So having a relatively nondescript surface, whether the ground or something else, creates a canvas for this lighting effect to play out on. In this case, I compose a

The ground plane here with its dappled light is the primary focal point of the image. The hunters are secondary – this image is more about the environment than the characters.

jungle scene and deliberately leave a chunk of rock for the light to play on that's low on detail and also low in value – it's very light so I can easily apply shadow to it to begin establishing my dappled illumination.

The leaves and branches of the trees act in the same way that a gobo does on a stage light. This is an opaque mask that, when placed over the lens of a stage light, makes

the light create a specific shape. Here, it's a group of shapes that are created by light passing through the trees. It's vital to note that there's plenty of light bouncing around in this type of environment and lighting scheme, so the shadows in your dappled light should never become too dark; there will always be secondary light sources flooding your areas in shadow.
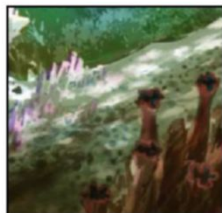
Step-by-step: Layering light and dark

1 I begin by using a Multiply layer to create a mottled group of shadows that more or less create the effect of light shining through vegetation and hitting the ground; this establishes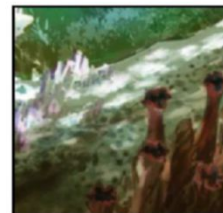 the shadows in the scene quickly without a huge amount of brushwork. It's also another opportunity to give the ground plain contour, texture and shape.
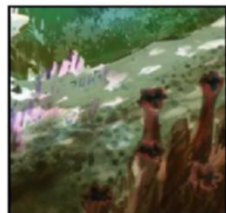
2 I use the Eraser tool to work subtractively. To make the shapes of the shadows and the highlights that they contain more interesting, I knock more negative shape into them and remove some of the shadow shape. I soften some edges so that the pools of light are more diffused; the objects casting the shadows are far away from where they're falling.

3 By selecting the contents of my Multiply layer and then inverting my selection, I develop a selection of the corresponding highlights. And by painting some lighter tones and colours into a hard light layer, I boost the brightness of these hot spots and create more contrast between light and dark and, subsequently, more visual interest.

NEXT MONTH: BLOCKING COLOUR IN ENVIRONMENTS | **CHROMATIC SHADOW ADVICE** | DEPICTING WARRIOR SCARS | **PAINTING FEATHERS** | ATMOSPHERIC NIGHT LIGHTING **AND MORE!**

Concept Art
Legends

These artists have made
a name for themselves as
pioneers of unique art

Khang Le

This Chinese artist thinks
art is like a puzzle…

"I generally look at concept art as solving a visual problem. Whether it's creating movie shots based on a script, designing an environment or character in a video game, or mood pieces for an animation, they all should solve what the client is trying to visualise. Whatever techniques, mediums or art styles are used, they should reinforce the core ideas and emotions of the project."

www.khang-le.com

➤➤

> 66 **The best references often win, because the world is infinitely richer than my simple brain** 99

Feng Zhu

He's either working on big
titles or sharing knowledge

"Since I started teaching in 2009, I've spent most
of my time painting and designing my own creations.
I'm no longer restricted to client specs or meeting their
deadlines. Now I have the freedom to do whatever
I want. This is definitely the most fun I've had thus far
in my design career. It's 100 per cent stress free. I take my
time, and don't rush or try to finish something quickly just for the sake of it.
If a painting takes me 20 hours, then 20 hours it is. My advice to students
is be patient. Your speed will increase with experience."
www.fengzhudesign.com   ➟

FENG'S TIP
STAY TRUE TO YOURSELF
"Don't paint and draw to impress others or get Facebook 'Likes'. You also don't need to follow trends or do whatever's popular. Instead, focus on your own ideas and always have fun."

" My advice to students is be patient. Your speed will increase with experience "

Colin Fix

Combining sketches and sculpts for the fun of it

"I remember watching the early '80s Swamp Thing movie on cable when I was a kid. It kind of freaked me out, but I loved it all at the same time. This is a Swamp Thing piece I did just for fun. It began as an image I painted in my sketchbook. I then did a quick sculpt of his head in ZBrush, comped it on to the sketchbook image, then finished it by painting it in Photoshop."

www.colinfix.blogspot.co.uk

> 66 **Share your work with other artists. The more feedback you get,** the better you'll become 99

COLIN'S TIP
SPREAD THE LOVE

"Share your work with other artists. The more feedback you get, the better you'll become. The more tips, ideas and techniques you share with others, the more it'll benefit everyone."

Ian McQue

Living a childhood dream, and getting paid to do it!

"I was 12 years old when I decided I wanted to be a concept artist. I had just seen Ralph McQuarrie's astonishing paintings in The Art of Star Wars and hadn't realised until then that someone might pay you to design spaceships and robots and all that cool stuff. I still can't quite believe I get paid to do it now. I'm a very lucky boy."

www.mcqueconcept.blogspot.co.uk ➤

> 66 **I still can't quite believe I get paid to do art and design now. I'm a very lucky boy** 99

IAN'S TIP

NEVER CLOSE YOUR EYES

"You should draw from life whenever the opportunity arises. Always carry a sketchbook and make notes of the things you see around you – this's what will give a sense of truth to your work, however fantastical your art may be. If it's grounded in reality it will appear more convincing to the viewer. Syd Mead said the best advice he was ever given was 'notice everything'. I'd go along with that."

"Concept art is like a special item in your tool pack that enables you to materialise and share the stuff the way you see it inside your head. The most important thing I learnt was to let go of opinions that restricted my work. Feeling a greater sense of freedom made it easier for me to achieve authentic and better results in my art."

www.sergibrosa.blogspot.co.uk ➤➤

SERGI'S TIP

WHY SO SERIOUS?

"As much as possible, try to enjoy every little step of the work you're doing. When you do, the results tend to have that extra little bit of magic, perceptible to everyone."

❝ Try to enjoy every little step of your work. If you do, the results tend to have that little extra bit of magic ❞

Simon Stålenhag

It's all about finding your own voice, says Simon

"I force myself not to think about how other people would have done it, and instead think of how I need to do it to make it work. When I was new to the discipline, I spent way too much time worrying about the 'right' way to do concept art. If it works, it's right. That's what's so interesting about the industry. It's driven by new ideas, which really invites you to experiment and to pour your own personality into what you do."

www.simonstalenhag.se

66 **The industry is driven by new ideas, which invites you to experiment, to pour your personality in** 99

POLIS

Sketchbook

Charlie Bowater

The Atomhawk artist reveals a sketchbook that mixes images from the imagination and photography

Artist PROFILE

Charlie Bowater
COUNTRY: England

Charlie lives in the north east of England. She works as a concept artist for Atomhawk by day and is a doodler of everything else by night.
www.charliebowater.wordpress.com

DANCE
"A little compilation sketch that's half-painting, half-sketch. This was based on rhythms and dancing after I ended up with a particular song stuck in my head."

SARINA CONCEPT
"Some early concept sketches for the design of Sarina, the young protagonist from Atomhawk's The Realm project."

ORCHID
"This is a fun character study inspired by the Princess Amidala character from the Star Wars prequels."
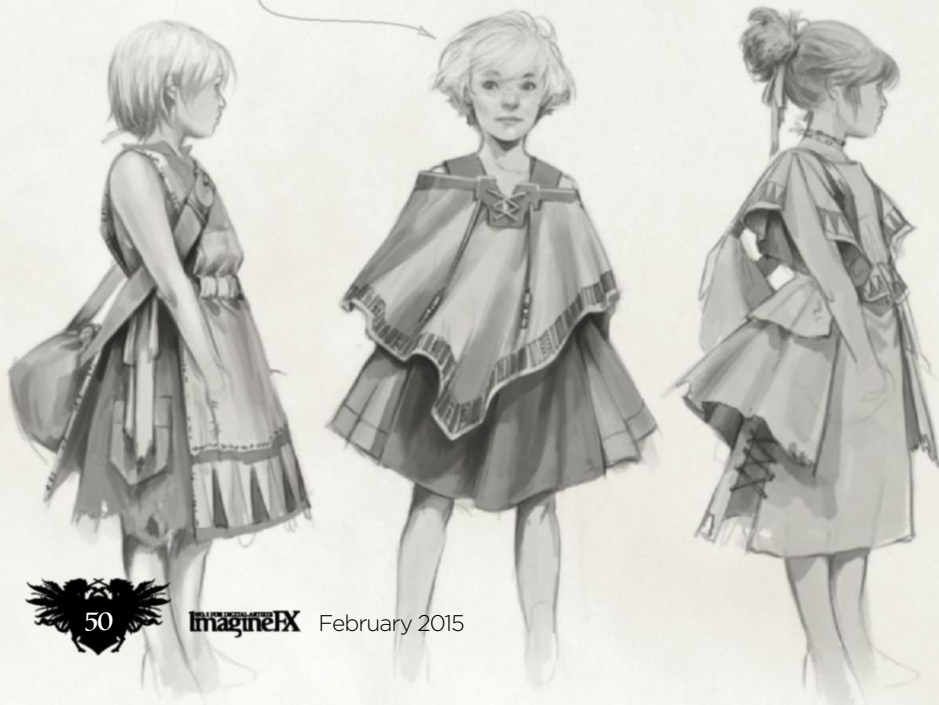
PORTRAIT
"I wanted to work some slight feline features, such as the nose and ears, into this character study."

"I wanted to work some slight feline features, such as the nose and ears, into this character study"

Sketchbook

LYING COLOUR

"A lunchtime sketch that ended up being a little more! No particular character in mind but a definite mix of Game of Thrones and Star Wars served as the inspiration."

RABBIT HOLE

"An Alice in Wonderland-inspired sketch. I recently began working on a faerie tales series and this is the next potential artwork in the lineup."

ANATOMY SKETCHES

"A group of sketches based around a bit of anatomy practice. There's a mixture of sketching from imagination and sketching from some photo reference."

SET OF DEMO SKETCHES

"A small group of very quick sketches that were originally created during an Atomhawk Design live demo, all about concept art."

ELLIOT
"A character sketch of a young girl. This was an early character design sketch for the main protagonist of a personal project I'm slowly working on."

PORTRAIT 2
"Just another quick and simple character sketch. I was pleased with how the headdress and jewellery turned out."

"A definite mix of Game of Thrones and Star Wars served as the inspiration"

Want to share your sketches with your fellow ImagineFX readers? Then drop us an email, with a selection of your artwork, to **sketchbook@imaginefx.com**, together with some information about yourself.

Cerberus, the three-headed guard dog to the Underworld, prepares to give Hercules a hard time.

WETA WORKSHOP

We talk to concept artists at the New Zealand studio that's behind some of the world's biggest blockbuster films

Think Weta Workshop and a few images tend to spring to mind. Peter Jackson wrangling data to create The Lord of the Rings' ground-breaking Gollum character, shrinking Elijah Wood and Martin Freeman to Hobbit size, and almost unbelievably epic battle scenes. But Weta isn't just a digital effects house to service Peter's adaptations of Tolkien's work. In fact, it's almost an entire entertainment industry unto itself.

"There's probably a bit of a misconception around Weta that we just do fantasy and we just do stuff with Peter Jackson," says Paul Tobin, who's one of Weta's concept artists. "But the reality is that we deal
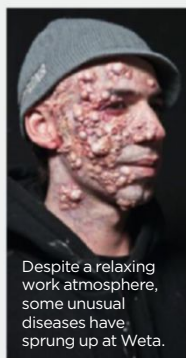
Despite a relaxing work atmosphere, some unusual diseases have sprung up at Weta.

Photo by Steve Unwin

with hundreds of jobs a year, literally hundreds. Some of them are film, some of them are TV, some of them are public art sculptures, museum pieces. We do an insane variety of work."

Weta Workshop – as opposed to Weta Digital – is where all the practical bits of the design and creation of physical props and characters happens. Based in Wellington, New Zealand, its roots stretch all the way back to Peter Jackson's gore-filled early works Braindead and Bad Taste. It went on to transform hundreds of metres of PVC

pipe into chainmail armour for The Lord of the Rings films, and it's branched out into designs and props for sci-fi hits Avatar and District 9. But its most recent project – Hercules – marks a return to the fantasy realms where it made a name for itself.

"The whole workshop is full of old props from the Hercules: The Legendary journeys and Xena: Warrior Princess TV shows, which Weta worked on," says concept artist and ImagineFX guru Christian Pearce. "It's kind of
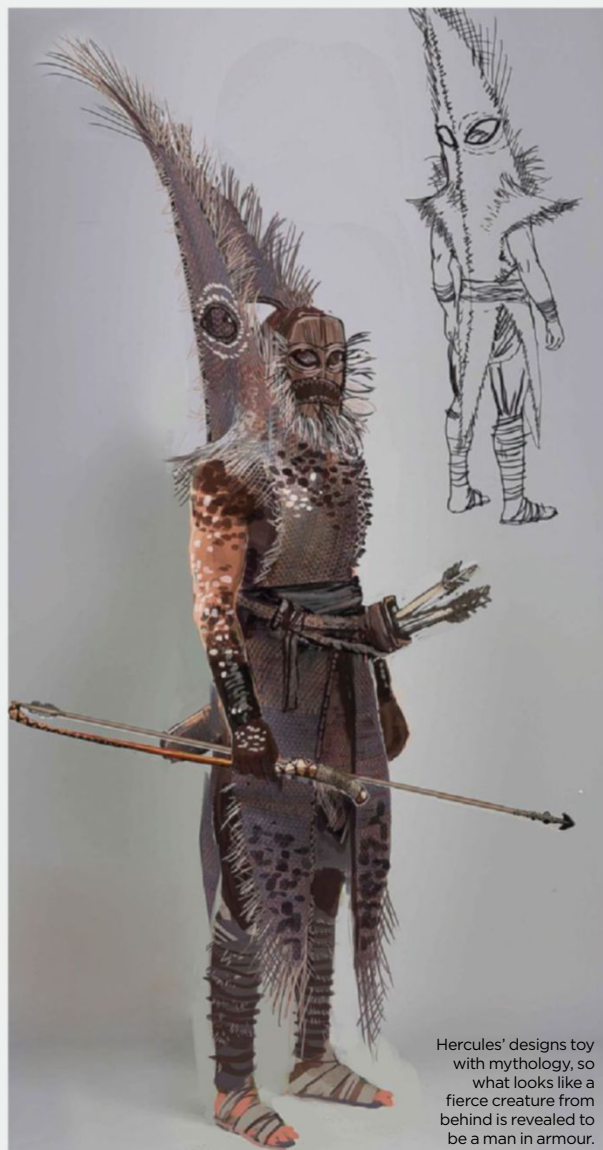

> ❝ We deal with hundreds of jobs a year, literally hundreds: film, TV, public art sculptures, museum pieces… ❞

Photo by Steve Unwin

Depicting a familiar figure. But Weta do a lot more than just Tolkien-inspired art and effects.

Paul Tobin put his history degree to good use in researching and designing this centaur armour.

Hercules' designs toy with mythology, so what looks like a fierce creature from behind is revealed to be a man in armour.

weird. It's come full-circle, back to really traditional designs and prop-building, like on the TV show – with a bit more budget."

As with many Hollywood films, the process of creating the big-screen Hercules has been a long and drawn-out one. Radical Publishing first suggested adapting its comic seven years ago, and employed Paul and Christian to create the concept art. The project floundered in development hell before director Brett Ratner got on board and resurrected it. "We do a lot of really early spec-jobs like this, where a ➡

WILLIAM BENNETT

What's Weta like for one of its newest concept artists?

What did you do before Weta?
Before starting at the workshop I was floundering in the stressful period after a degree, when you realise you have to turn the past few years of your life into a living very quickly. I'd been living in Palmerston North, New Zealand, for the past four years and so the work mostly involved small local illustration-based jobs such as album covers and what-not. On the upside though, not being committed to a full-time degree gave me lots of time to focus on personal work and projects. Essentially, it was lots of stuff with other local artists, and just developing my own ideas. It was probably this period that enabled me to further build skills and a base of work that helped me weedle into the industry.

What's your latest project?
I can't talk about anything specific, but it's a project of the like I never imagined I'd have the opportunity to be involved with. Fun times!

How is living in Wellington?
Wellington is fantastic. I've wanted to move here for a long time. The only hurdle is the unavoidable one of all new places: having to form new networks and splicing yourself into another community.

What's your best tip for artists who wish to get into the industry?
Make the things you want to see. Okay, I really don't know of any other real strategy, but that shouldn't matter because you probably love doing it anyway! Then if it doesn't lead anywhere, it doesn't matter because you were having a blast!

Does Weta offer support and training, or are you left to figure things out for yourself?
Having come in with no previous studio experience has meant there was a steep learning curve. The support of both peers and senior colleagues is phenomenal, however. Everyone helps each other. As for training, my comparatively short experience so far means I haven't had the need to learn unfamiliar subjects, but generally Weta does provide training if it helps make an employee's craft stronger.

What are you working on next?
I honestly have no idea. I can guess, based on where current projects are sitting, but even on a day-to-day level workload in the design studio can see-saw right from slammed to scratching in the dirt with a stick. But that's fine 'cos sticks are cool.

Unfortunately William isn't allowed to tell us what he's working on at the moment – but we can only guess it's something really, really cool.
www.drednorzt.org

Weta's work on 2014's Hercules film marked another return to traditional fantasy for the antipodean studio.

➥ production will come to us, we'll do a design, and see that off and then they'll go and get funding," says Paul. "Usually we never hear from it again, but this is one of the success stories."

Once the project was off the ground (again), Paul and Christian were commissioned to create the film's key concept art. They were given very clear briefs for the main characters, and more freedom for creatures and the supporting cast. Weta has become one of the go-to houses for this kind of work because of its intimate understanding of the process of making objects for films.

"We're in a pretty unique situation here because we're in the same building where the things we draw get built. So we're

Weta Workshop is in an unusual situation in that items get drawn and built in the same building.

directly answerable to the poor guys who have to build this stuff," says Christian. "I certainly got knocked on my head a few times early in my career here for drawing things you can build but that can't really function. You learn a lot about armour and what restricts movement and what's actually functional, just by being in the same building as the guys who have to build it and even have to wear it."

Weta wasn't responsible for the creation of Hercules' costumes and props, though, which lead to creations being significantly

> ❝ For me, Weta is the best place in the world to work. I just can't imagine working anywhere else ❞

altered or even completely rejected from the concept art. "When we're not involved in the manufacture part of the process we don't have that same level of art direction to make sure the original concept is seen all the way through," says Paul. "To be honest, it's not uncommon for designs to change on any film, so it's not a criticism of the art department on Hercules."

Despite the frustration and disappointment in seeing some of their favourite work modified by a third party, Paul and Christian are adamant that being a concept artist is one of the coolest jobs in the world. The duo seem incredibly laid-back, even for New Zealanders, and as the concept phase takes place before filming there are few frantic deadlines. Everyone

Paul envisages a member of the Bessi, a tribe that inhabited eastern Europe.

feels relaxed to explore the visual language of the film: the "honeymoon period", as Paul dubs it. As for Weta, working there is a dream come true for the concept artists.

"It's just a really exciting place to work," says Christian. "Any time you get out of your chair and walk around you'll see sculptures happening. Quite often you'll be working on a film and there's an equally large-scale film happening with people sitting right next to you. For me it's the best place in the world to work. I just can't imagine working anywhere else."

"No one would hire him," interjects Paul, tongue firmly in cheek.

You can check out Weta's work in Hercules, out now on DVD and Blu-ray. ●

NICE AND TYDEUS

Christian Pearce reveals his process of creating the surly, oversized Tydeus, for Hercules

To start with I chop up a couple of photos of figures and mash 'em together into a pose that will serve as a base for the armour concepts.

I base my design on some interesting historical Mycenaean armour that I think would work well for Tydeus. He was described as being of towering height, silent and heavily armoured, with his face partly obscured by a protective gorget.

Building blocks
After my line-drawing sketch I block in shapes for the armour using an opaque layer. I overlay metallic textures to break up the surface, and use a dual-action brush for a weathered, beaten effect.

Upcycled armour
This version has changed from bronze, cohesive armour to a more scavenged, battle-scarred option. I use reference for the disparate elements – taken from fallen foes – to create his costume.

Variations on a theme
This illustrates just some of the variations this design went through. This is a normal part of the process: we'll go through many iterations and work with the director to build towards a final design.

Final analysis
This turns out to be my final approved design for the character. 'Approved' is a relative term in the industry however and this character looks completely different in the finished film!

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VIDEO WORKSHOP

NO.1 FOR DIGITAL ARTISTS
ImagineFX
Workshops

Advice from the world's best artists

60

64   72   82

This issue:

Photoshop
PAINT A PORTRAIT FROM IMAGINATION

Put your references, mood boards and sketchbooks to one side, and see how **Miles Johnston** visualises a fantasy female portrait from scratch

Artist PROFILE

Miles Johnston
COUNTRY: England

Miles is a freelance illustrator working and living in London. He studied for three years at Atelier Stockholm and tries to balance digital and traditional work.

http://ifxm.ag/miles-j

GET YOUR RESOURCES
See page 6 now!

P ainting a portrait from imagination is a tricky beast! There are so many variables when it comes to pulling off an effective image. When working without a reference or clear goal it can be easy to become lost and disheartened, so I hope by showing my own chaotic workflow I might be able to offer some pointers or at least some reassurance that it doesn't always go to plan.

My approach will assume a little basic knowledge of the structure of the head

and some understanding of fundamental drawing principals. If you find it impossible to draw from imagination those are the things you have to get down first. Go outside and fill some sketchbooks with studies from photos and from life and you will greatly improve your ability to paint from your head.

In this workshop I'll give a general outline of my process and some of my personal favourite techniques in Photoshop. Normally, I'd put some work into layer management and keeping all

the different elements separate, but I've been doing so much traditional work recently that I'll aim to work on as few layers as possible, merging every now and then to keep track of progress. You might want to think about using a more ordered method with layer masks if you want to involve any complex elements. However, if you're new to digital and find some of that stuff a little intimidating, don't worry: you can still find ways to achieve interesting results with a relatively simple workflow and persistence.

PRO SECRETS

If in doubt, repaint
Over and over again I've encountered situations where I get stuck noodling and tweaking with something trying to save it, where I'd have been better off taking a short break and starting again from scratch. This might apply to a specific section of a painting or the whole thing, but there's a good chance that you'll save time in the long run by trying a fresh approach.

1 Lines, gesture, composition
The beginning is the hardest and most important part of the whole process. It might take hours of thumbnailing to reach this point, or you may quickly stumble across a decent sketch. My goal is to create a portrait with eye contact and room for text and other formatting. I keep my lines very loose and focus on structure and composition without getting into details.

2 Value block in
I'm trying to decide on a lot of things. What will the design be like? Where's the light coming from? Which elements are darker or lighter than each other and how will this affect the composition? You'll have an easier time painting by sticking with lines until the drawing is locked down, but sometimes I want to experiment with my workflow by diving straight in. ➤➤
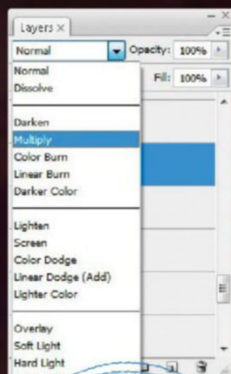
3 Colour block in

I add some colours using big soft brushes and different layer modes. Multiply and Color Dodge help to push the sense of light. I further establish the sense of light and materials and group together different elements. By keeping the value range on different materials separate, the darkest areas on skin won't be as dark as the lightest areas on a matt black cloth, for example.
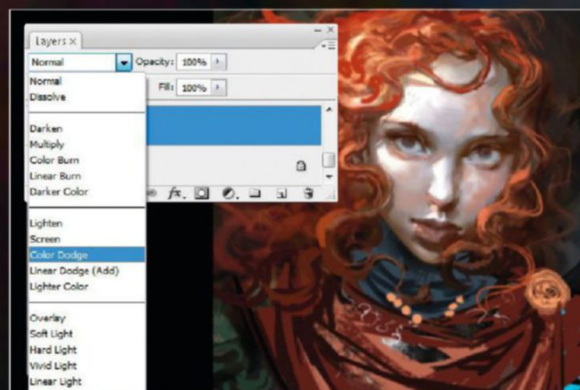

4 Pushing the light

I love the Color Dodge layer mode. You can use it with big soft brushes and saturated colours to quickly paint in bright light sources. I settle on having direct light coming from above left as well as a general ambient light on the face. I keep changing my mind and experimenting with the design of her outfit. I wouldn't recommend this: it can get very frustrating!
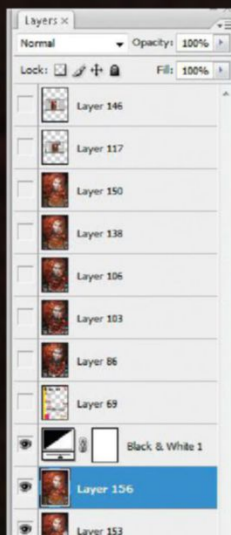
5 Values come first

Values are more important than colour and I advise creating a black and white adjustment layer that you can flip on and off to check that they're reading correctly. Everything is still very loose: I don't want to commit to rendering anything out until I'm happy with the thumbnail. I still haven't settled on the design and don't like how evenly spaced the composition is.
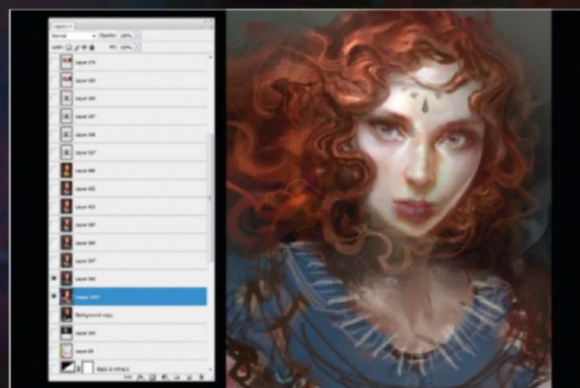
6 Experimenting with the drawing

This is one of four or five different ways I try to mix up the composition. I hate how much 'floating head syndrome' is happening and wonder if painting her neck in would help add some gesture. I start to wish I'd put more thought into the initial drawing. Repainting areas is tedious work, but ultimately good practice if you learn from your mistakes.
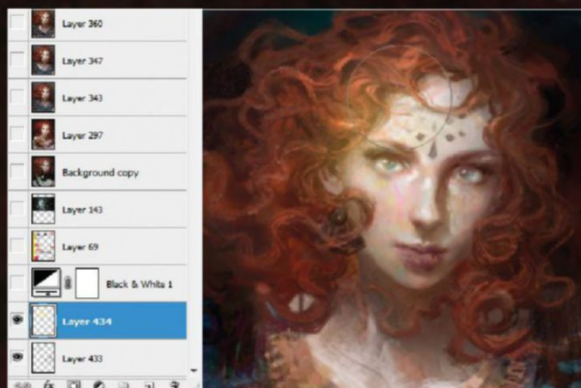
7 Colour experimentation

The painting has begun to look too plastic and textureless, so I use some textured brushes with Color Dynamics enabled to allow for some happy accidents to occur. I'm looking for eye-catching temperature effects and colours that will vibrate next to each other. It's not always necessary to aim for realistic or plausible – things don't always have to make sense.
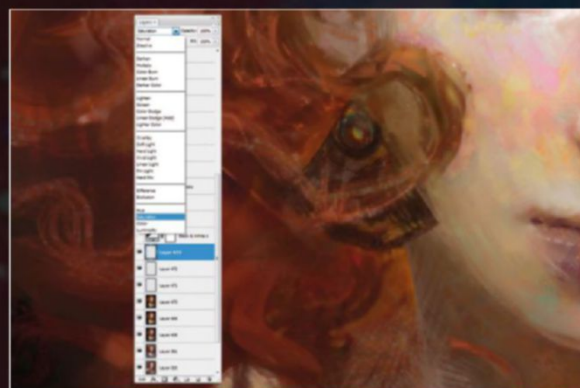

8 Colour in the darks

I remove unwanted blacks and add some dark saturated accents to the bottom of my value range, using Saturation and Lighten layers. These colours don't jump out when the painting is in black and white, which tells me the value is correct. I like the effect this gives, especially on translucent materials such as hair: it gives the impression of light glowing through them.
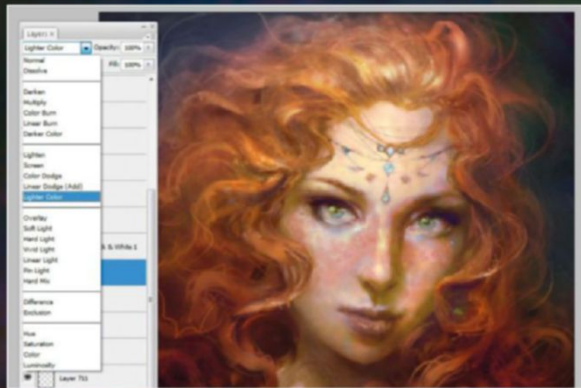
9 Softening effect on the colours

Here's a trick for softening the colours without affecting the sharpness too greatly. First I copy everything to a new layer. Then, I run the image through a Gaussian Blur filter. Next I set that new blurry layer to Lighter Color mode and finally adjust how strong I want the effect to be using Hue/Saturation. It can add a nice ambience to the painting!
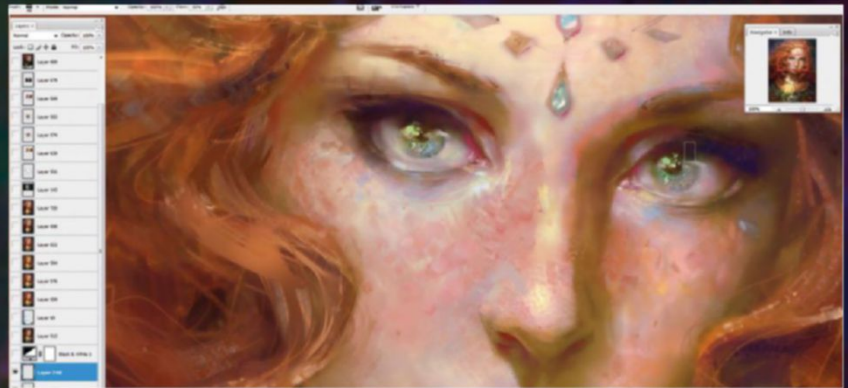
10 Establishing detail

Now that I'm starting to settle on the composition, I can begin to go in and work on the details. I start looking at close-up photos of eyes and jewellery for inspiration of the kinds of things I might include, although I try to avoid directly referencing anything because it most likely won't fit into the drawing I already have. I'm working flatly and not worrying about layer management with this painting.
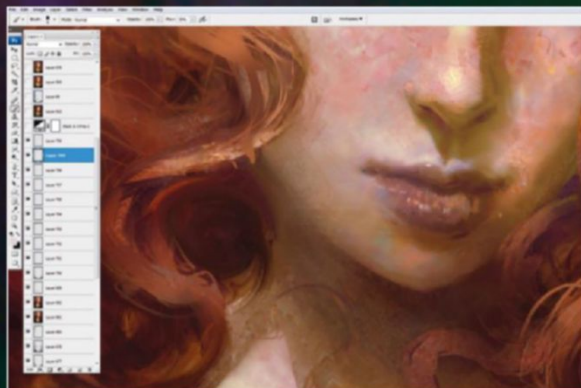
11 Be creative with edges

Edges are important for making your painting believable and are a good opportunity to be expressive and creative with your mark-making. Too much sharp edges and it'll look like layers of cut-out graphic elements all stuck together; too soft and it will just be mush. Edges are great tool for bringing elements in and out of focus, and telling the viewer what's important.
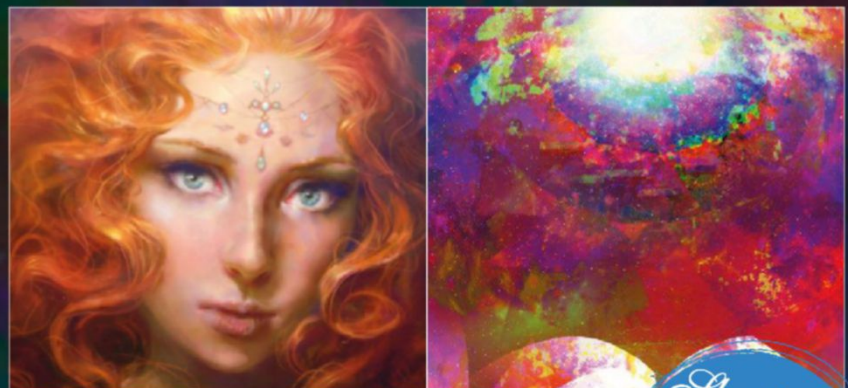
12 Trying out textures and effects

I start using elements from the background of another painting of mine to try to find ways to frame the portrait. I like using the Exclusion and Difference layer modes to stumble across bizarre colour combinations. Presentation is key to selling your work, so don't become lazy at the end. We live in a visually saturated world, so always push the best elements of your art.

Shortcuts
Liquify tool
Cmd+Shift+X
Ctrl+Shift+X
Make adjustments to the proportions and shape of elements. Ideal for portrait work.
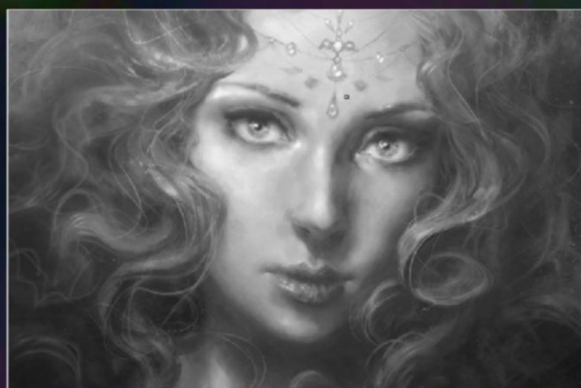
13 Greyscale trick

Here's how to paint under a black and white adjustment layer without messing up your colours. If you create a Luminosity layer, you can paint normally while the adjustment layer is still set to Visible. Then, when you hide the adjustment layer, the colours still work with correct temperatures. This enables you to work as if the image were greyscale at any stage of the process.
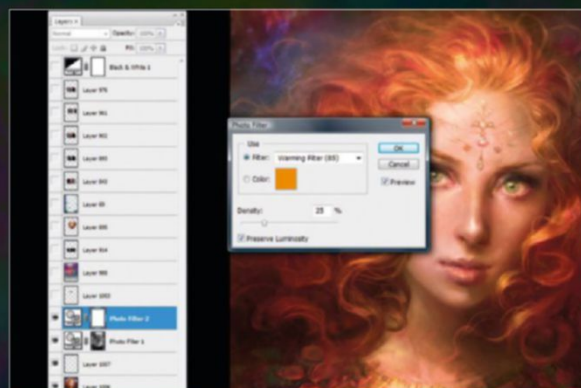
14 Filters and colour adjustments

Right at the end of a painting I'll use adjustment layers such as photo filters and the Curves tool. I find this tweaking phase very enjoyable, and try not to rush it as I search for the perfect mood. Why don't you try layering different effects, use big soft brushes on layer mode types you've never tried out, and get those colours just right!

PRO SECRETS

Establish a save strategy

As you work on something for a long time, it can be a good idea to keep multiple layered versions of your paintings. It mitigates the risk of losing all your work in the rare event of a PSD file becoming corrupted. I also recommend saving as a new file if you ever decided to try out a drastic change in the image. This will enable you to experiment more fearlessly, knowing you can always go back to the old version.

Inkpad, ArtStudio & Photoshop
SIMPLIFY YOUR LINES & VALUES

Robh Ruppel shows how he starts with a simple but strong mono image to ensure effective composition

Artist PROFILE

Robh Ruppel
COUNTRY: US

Robh is a production designer in games and movies. He has worked on the Uncharted series, TRON Uprising and Meet the Robinsons as well as with DreamWorks, Disney and Paramount.
**www.robhruppel.com**

GET YOUR RESOURCES
See page 6 now!

Everyone's approach to painting is different, but there are a few universal truths in art making. Having a clear idea of what your painting is about and understanding how shapes, design and composition tell that story should never be overlooked in favour of technique.

I always try to develop a design that works. I used to paint in the field all day, then come back, look over what I'd done and realise that most of the time I'd recorded accurately what was in front of me but it was no great composition. The pieces lacked a strong supporting idea. It was like recording great dialogue on a film set, but having no overall storyline.

So I set about establishing a process that worked for me, to address what I perceived as my weak point. The simplest solution was to see if I had an idea worth painting before I invested time and effort into something that couldn't be improved after visualising the initial concept.

Great design works in only a few values, much as a compelling story can be summarised in a few sentences. So I looked to the great designers of history, from Caravaggio, Wyeth and Frazetta to cinematographers I admire such as Roger Deakins and Conrad Hall. All their compositions have a main idea and parts that support the idea. To that end, the first thing I need before devoting time to a piece is to lay down a good design, idea or composition. The fastest way to do that is to work in mono and if the result isn't compelling in its abstract form, dynamic or interesting, then it's best to try another location, rework the design or go home.

VIDEO WORKSHOP
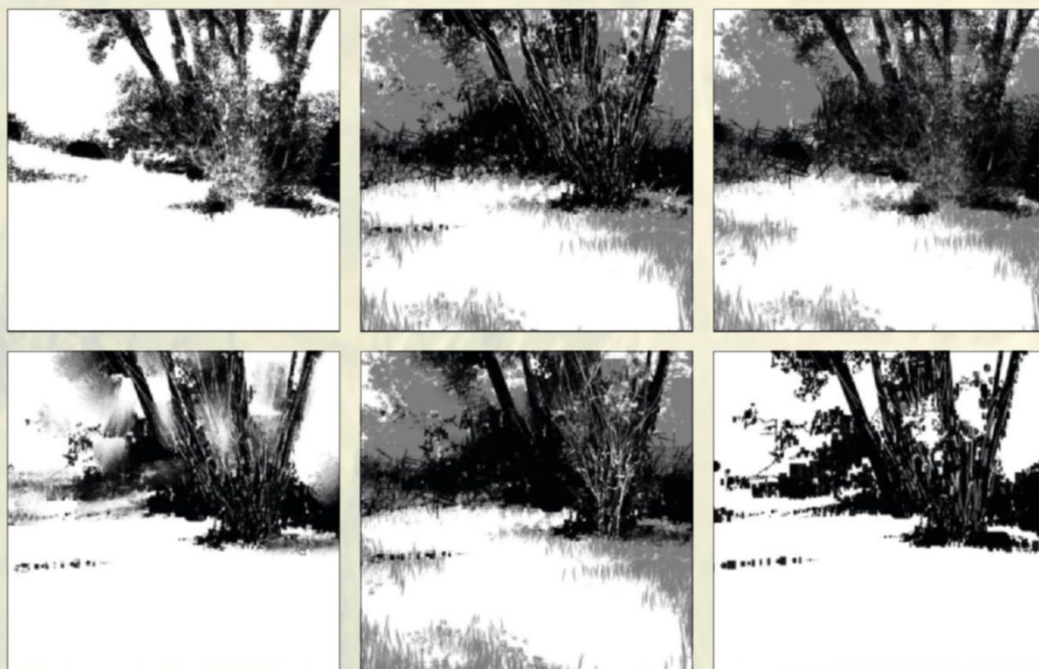
1 Translate what I see

I look for the right combination of shapes and calligraphy in black-and-white before going into colour. None of this is literal; I'm using abstract shapes and marks to represent what I'm seeing. This is what art essentially is, after all. I'm not trying to duplicate anything precisely, merely translate what I'm seeing and feeling into the language I'm using – in this case, the marks that a digital paint program makes.
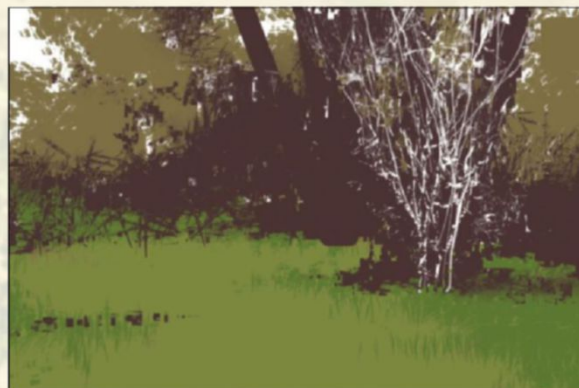
2 Refining my design

Once I have a design I like, I can use the elements on their own layer, lock the pixels, and begin to adjust colours and textures. Note, though, that none of the finishing steps are worth anything unless my design has some validity to begin with.

3 Flat colours

I start by laying in flat colour and adjusting it until the overall 'read' and colour value relationships are correct. This takes time, but is important to get right. I'm setting up my 'realism' in this phase. If I don't depict these relationships correctly, no amount of detail will ever make it look real.
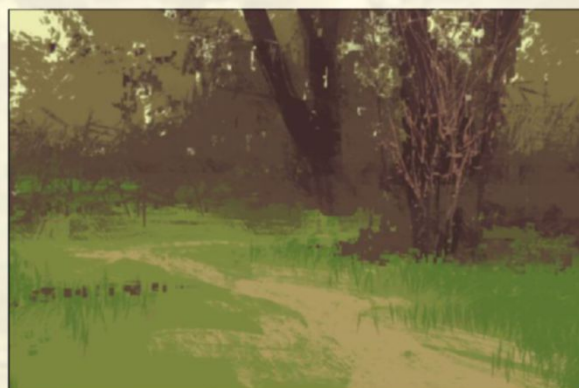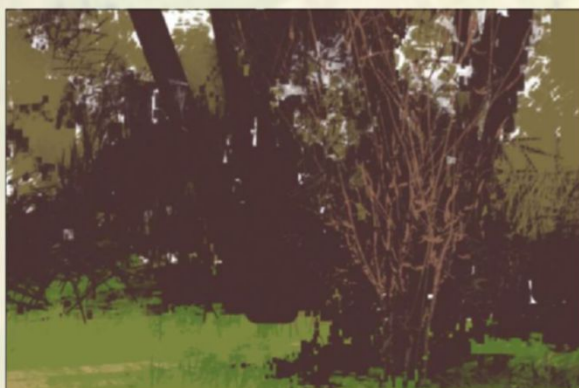

4 Simplifying what I see

The interaction of light and materials and the visual grouping that occurs when you squint determines the colour and value. I adjust them until they approximate the relationships I see before me. The dynamic range of real life is much larger than any media can reproduce, so I have to group, edit and simplify because I have only about 10 to 12 distinct tones to work with.

5 Leading the eye

I lay in my path, which serves both to lead the eye into the picture and reinforce the perspective of the ground plane. Next, I look for some tonal variation within the larger dark mass that I've established. This involves mostly separating out the darker trunks from the noise of the underbrush.
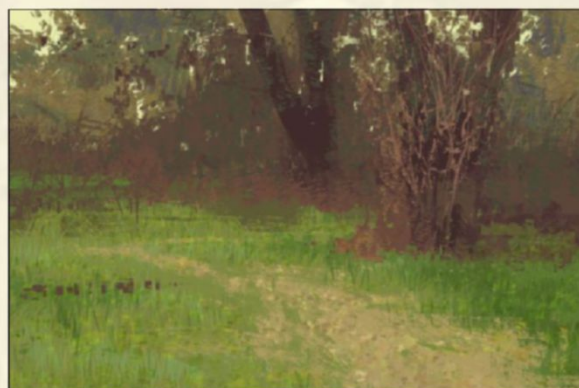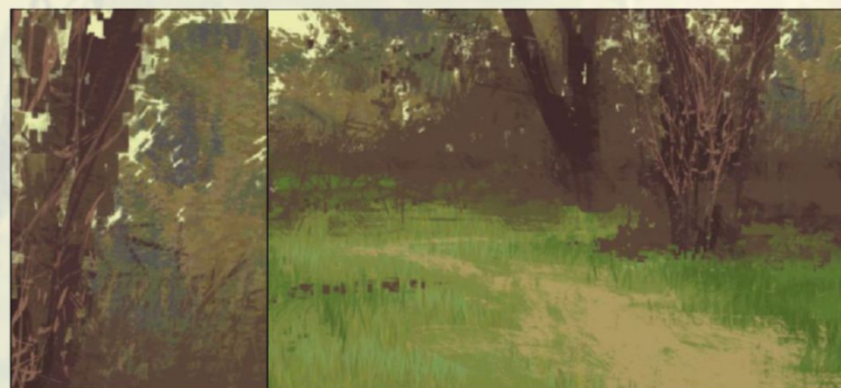
6 Noise and texture

Once these flat, poster-like colours are working, I can move on to the noise, texture and detail part of the painting. It needs to look believable at this point. If it doesn't, keep adjusting until the forms make sense and are working with the surrounding colours.

7 Solving a jigsaw

Now I look for subtlety and variation in those flat tones. I average the areas to ensure that the entire image has the right value relationships, then look for the variation within individual pieces. It's a little bit like trying to see the finished jigsaw puzzle image with just six key pieces in place.

8 Boost depth and atmosphere

I identify colour and texture variation to bring out the depth and atmosphere in the piece. I use the simplest of brushes with a little Scattering turned on to get the visual 'noise' that I see in front of me. I'm not trying to duplicate reality exactly, but approximate the effect I see. This is an important difference.

9 The Scatter brush

Natural scenes like this have so much visual complexity that the best we can hope for is to capture the effect of all that complexity. I'm working on achieving the illusion of what I see, the visual impression, rather than a literal recreation of every dead stick and leaf. To that end, the Scatter brush works wonders.
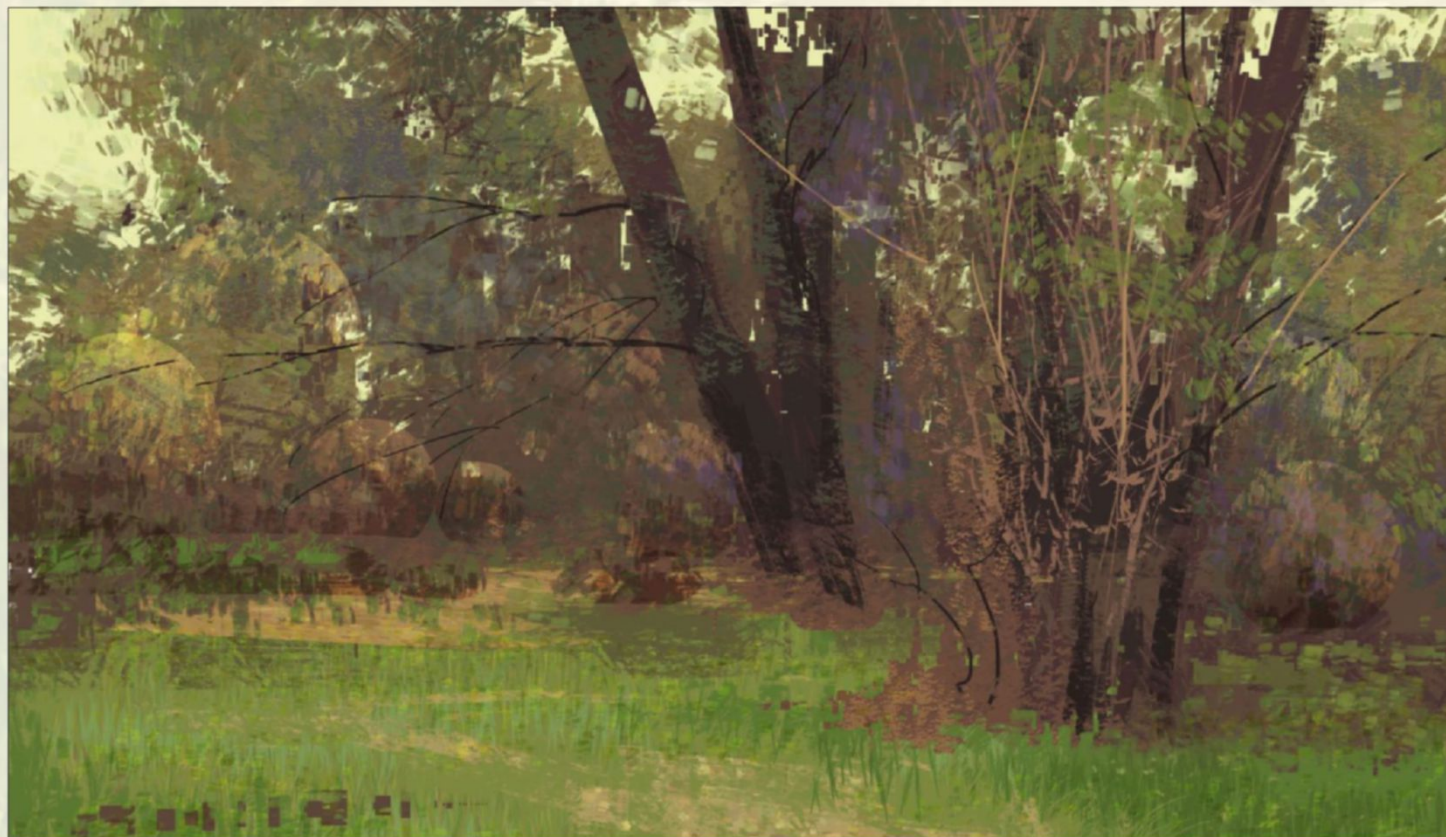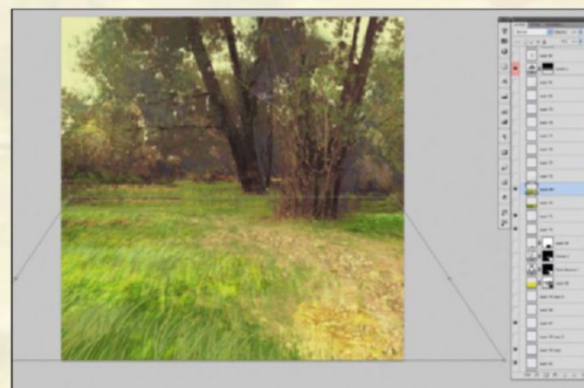

10 Recreating the bushes

There are a lot of layered bushes in the scene, so I'm going to recreate them by making a few simple paths to approximate their shape. I'm representing the idea of the bushes, which are merely simple volumes reacting to light and showing depth in space. I use an Overlay layer and model the light and shadow side with a basic Scatter brush.
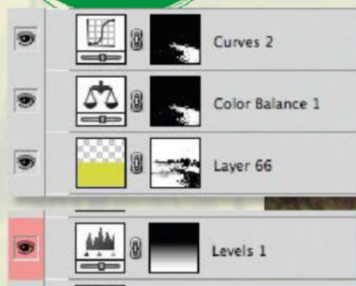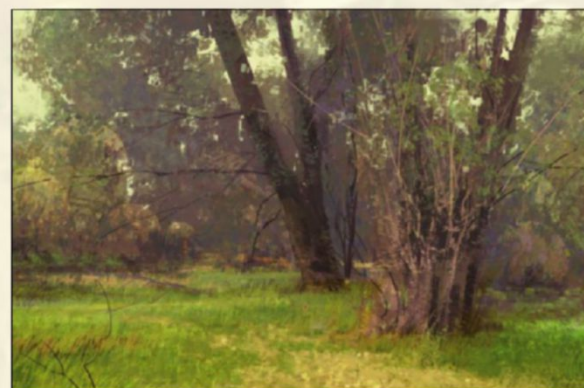
11 Establishing scale

I look for my darker darks, which happen to be in the tree trunks, and then I add few delicate branches. This establishes scale. If everything in the scene had the same chunky thickness it wouldn't represent the variety of sizes that exist in real life. Once I add a few of these the smaller marks, scale is implied for the rest of the painting.

Shortcuts

Hue/Saturation
Cmd+U (Mac)
Ctrl+U (PC)
Click the Colorize tab to alter the flat grey value you started your design with.

12 Transform the image

My ground plane isn't supporting the depth in the image as much as I'd like. So I copy the image and transform it with the Perspective tool. I then add a few implied texture changes to break up all the green. Even though there are no blatant perspective cues here, like railroad tracks, every scene carries perspective cues and it's the artist's job to reinforce them.

PRO SECRETS

Adjust colours
A flat colour layer can easily be adjusted in a variety of ways to achieve the right look. Color Balance, Levels and Hue/Saturation are all tools I use to adjust my colours.

13 Final adjustments

Now that the image is far enough along I can start the final adjustments. I use any and all adjustment layers including Levels, Hue/Saturation and Curves. I may even mask off a part of the image so that it isn't affected by the adjustment layer.
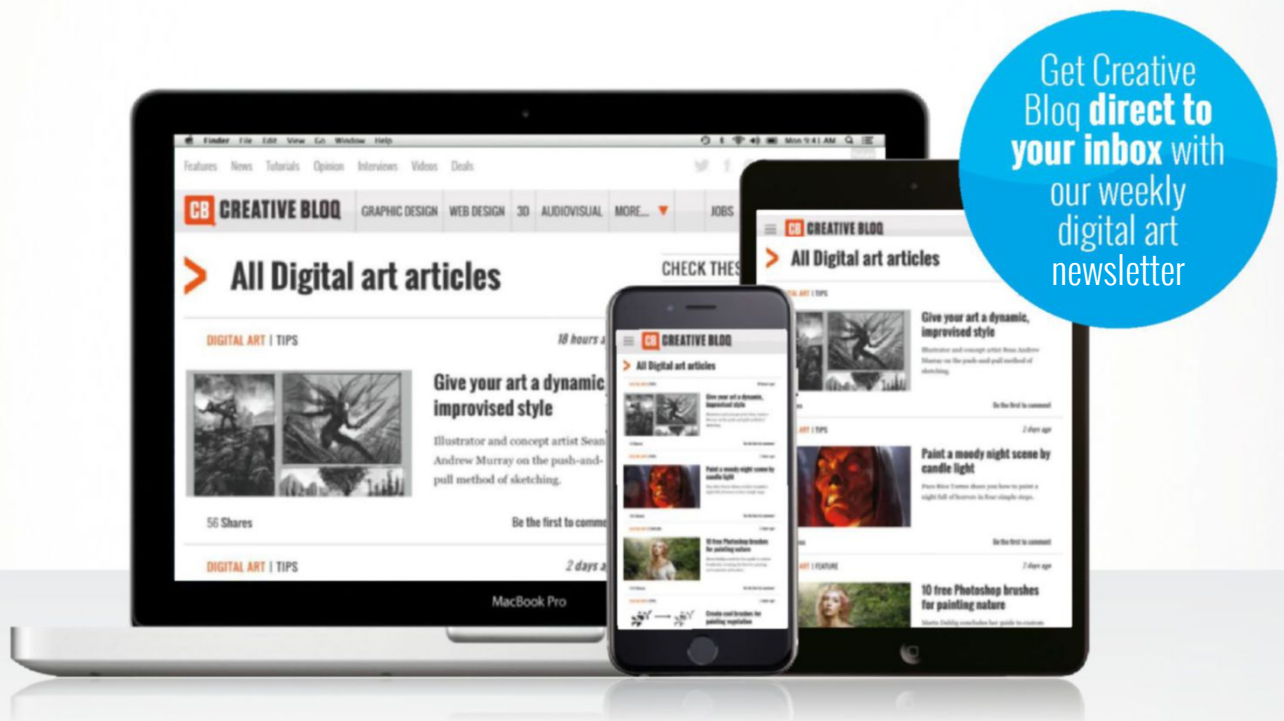

14 Directional light

The ground plane still needs some help, so I introduce some finer textures in the more distant areas to further exaggerate how it recedes into the background, and add a few small twigs to give it more depth. Finally, I paint in a little directional light from the left to model out the forms so that they have a three-dimensional aspect to them.

GO CRAZY FOR

Sci-fi art!

New ways to concept, draw and paint
art that's out of this world!

Create a modern, sassy sci-fi character, with concept artist Fred Augis as your walkthrough guide

© Applibot

© Games Workshop

Photoshop

CREATE DYNAMIC CHARACTERS

Arthur Mask explains how to create characters with different body types, tied together with coherent style and colour. Welcome to Arthur's world!

Artist PROFILE

Arthur Mask
COUNTRY: Brazil

Arthur learned to draw by himself and his first sketch was a mosquito, when he was just two years old. Nowadays, he still draws, but now it's monsters and villains.
http://ifxm.ag/a-mask

GET YOUR RESOURCES
See page 6 now!

Creating characters, scenes and stories has always been an immensely pleasurable experience. It's always a lot of fun for me and I never tire of it. My methods of creation are sometimes strange and disorganised when I'm dealing with personal works, and the illustrations almost always change during the course of the journey. This applies both to the characters, which often take on a life of their own and grow in directions I hadn't anticipated, and to the atmosphere and colour palette of the whole scene, which can change radically as I try out different hues for the ambient lighting. This in turn influences the colouring of every element in the image.

I create my art using Photoshop in a simple way without using many of the resources it has to offer, such as filters and effects. I use pretty much just a standard brush, always working with Pen Pressure, varying Opacity, along with different layer modes and the Eraser. I apply some texture brushes in certain parts just to produce an effect, but that's about it!

1 Initial sketch

In my starting sketch I define the composition and the positions of the characters. I give each one a different shape and personality so the scene will be the most interesting possible and tell a story, whether in a direct or indirect way. In the process, I usually refine the characters. I keep in mind that everything I do at the beginning can be improved or totally changed by the end.
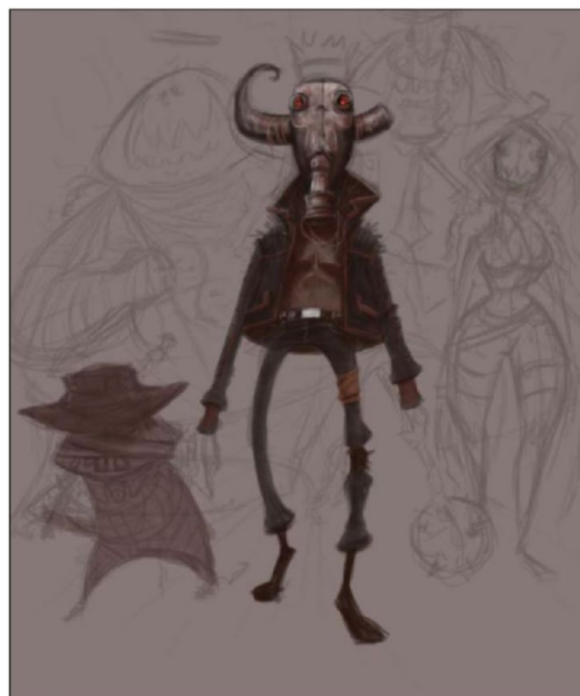
2 First element colours

I start painting one element or character first so that I have a reference point for the rest of the characters and the scene as a whole. I think about whether the colour palette will be hot or cold and more saturated or less, and where the light source will be placed. I always imagine this first element with a white and neutral light and then mentally make it colder or warmer.
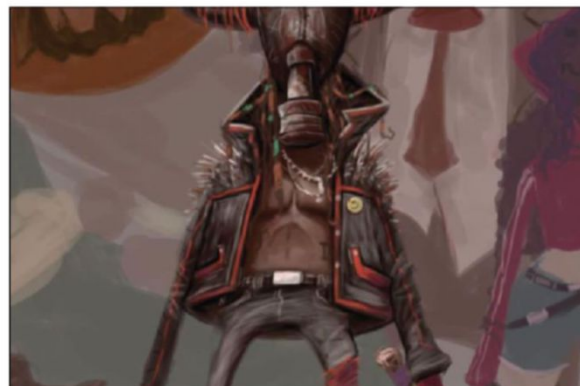
3 General colour and harmony

I begin by roughing in the scene as a whole to test the colour scheme and the harmony between the characters. I always start with a medium colour and then the shadows and highlights. I begin with solid colours only and then add details and other shades of these colours. Then I step back to assess how harmonious and pleasing the scene is.

4 More details and depth

After this first colour test I begin to detail and better define a particular element, enhancing its colours. I keep checking that the scene continues to look harmonious as I add more highlights and shadows in order to give more depth and volume to the chosen element.
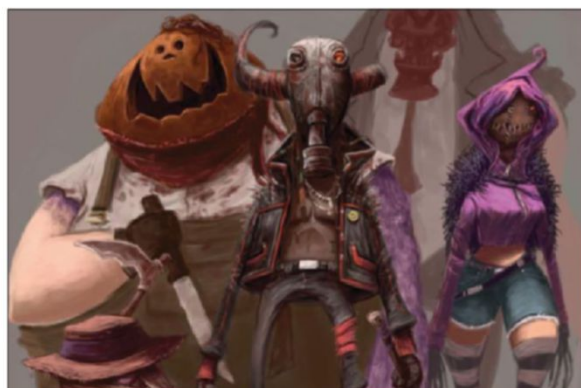
5 Adding new textures

I carry on working character by character, bringing each personality out by adding defining detail and creating spotlights that establish the solidity of the figures. I next start to add new textures in the illustration such as fur, textile patterns and skin.

6 Redesigning elements

If a character doesn't come out the way I want, I redo a sketch over the initial element I want to change, providing new features. The illustration doesn't need to always follow a linear pattern of beginning, middle and end. I can always go a step back and rework it to reach a more balanced outcome.

7 A more effective character

After my changes, my revised character (wearing a shirt and tie) has become more compact. Previously, a hat gave him longish lines, but after the redesign it's more harmonious and charismatic; the Mickey Mouse ears fits in better with his companions. It also gives him more personality.

8 Background colour

At this point, I choose the general background colour, which enables me to start to define the tone of the light that will affect all the colours of the characters and other elements. This provides an overall atmosphere, giving a dramatic look to the scene and establishing some sense of context for it.

9 **Ambient light effect**

I add the ambient atmosphere that will interact with the colours of the characters, placing them in the scene hierarchically and separating planes, adding distance between background and characters. I next add hints of the background colour to various elements, making the scene more convincing. Initially I test it on the central figure in the foreground and then apply it to the rest.

Shortcuts
Vary brush size
[or] when brush is
selected (PC & Mac)
A quick and easy way to increase or decrease your brush size while painting.
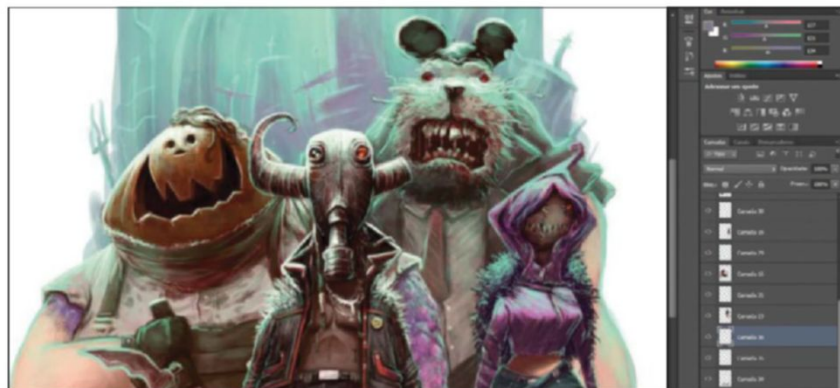
10 More ambient light

Picking up the ambient light colour doesn't just tie things together – it can also be used to enhance contrast and sculpt the forms through careful placement of stronger or lighter tones of the ambient light on the characters. Then I refine the details in textures and materials and make the ambient light interact throughout.

11 Review and add more illustration

I don't necessarily follow a linear process during the creation of an illustration – it's something that keeps evolving itself. You need to develop a method that you feel comfortable working with and which gives you a pleasing result no matter how many times you change, or revise and improve until it looks the way you want.

Shortcuts
Zoom in and out
Ctrl+ and Ctrl– (PC)
Cmd+ and Cmd– (Mac)
Switch quickly between a close view of details and a handy overview of your canvas.

12 Angle of light

I think of each artwork as a study piece, a way to improve and to ensure that I evolve as an artist. I work on the contrast in the colours of the background and the shadows that affect the characters. I draw a light from above that falls on the characters, so that all the light comes from the same point.

PRO SECRETS

Study!
Always look around you, and look at how the light behaves. Study anatomy, but use reference only for studies and for stimulating your imagination. Don't be afraid to defy common sense. Don't be lazy – draw, get intimate with pencils, brush, tablet or whatever is needed and whatever you enjoy working with.

13 More details and corrections

At this point, I refine the details on the clothes of the characters, adding buckles, belts, elements of pop culture, necklaces, scars, scratches and textures in shades of blood, tissue textures and details like the rat stole on the female character. I correct and refine the anatomy, fixing the leg on that character, and add details such as the knee pad.

14 Finishing touches

I add the final details, fixing some stray brush strokes. To refine the image as a whole, I add a more sketch-style finish in certain areas and draw some more scribbly lines on the background. As a finishing touch I add some personal style details, such as a crown and a halo, sometimes skulls, speech balloons with symbols, and the illustration is done.
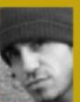
SketchBook Pro
GET TO KNOW THE BRUSH PALETTE

CORE SKILLS

Paris Christou explains why organising your brushes and tools and managing their properties will improve your creative workflow

Artist PROFILE

Paris Christou
COUNTRY: Cyprus

Paris is a 2D animator, illustrator and teacher at ToonBox Studio. He's also a prolific YouTuber, best known for his cartoon pin-up character Cherry.
www.toonboxstudio.com

SketchBook Pro comes with a variety of brushes and tools to fit the needs of every artist or designer of all levels of proficiency. All the brushes are displayed in one easy-to-access tool bar called the Brush palette.

This palette offers all the basic tools with simple adjustable properties for you to enjoy working with. The icons within the Brush Palette are graphically visual and easy to identify, which all helps to contribute to a smooth and user-friendly creative workflow.

In this quick article you'll learn how to locate the Brush palette within SketchBook Pro, how to open the Brush Properties panel for each brush and how to organise your brushes to improve your painting experience.

1 Locating your brushes

The Brush palette is a window that's located on the left side of the SketchBook Pro screen by default. If you can't see it, just click the Windows tab on the main top toolbar to switch it on. The palette consists of two rows of many tools such as pencils, brushes, synthetic brushes, erasers and smear/smudge brushes. At the top of the Brush palette are two key icons, explained in the next two steps.
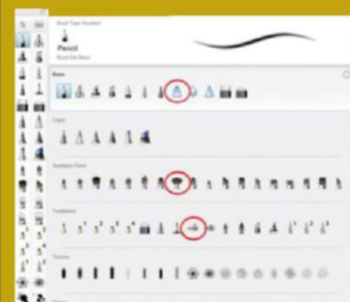
2 Explore Brush Properties

The icon on the left is the Brush Properties window. Once you select a specific brush or tool from the palette and then click the Brush Properties button, a pop-up window will appear. This window enables you to adjust the properties of the selected brush/tool to your liking. Each brush will be slightly different, but it's straightforward enough to adjust its properties.

3 Accessing more brush tools

The icon on the right opens the Brush Library. You'll see another pop-up window presenting every single brush and tool that the software has to offer. There are 100 preset brushes and tools that have been specifically designed for different types of artists. Take the time to scroll through each tool and test out their properties to see which tool fits your workflow and style.

Brush Properties

Airbrush — Edit...
Size: 60,4
Flow: 43%
Reset   Save   Cancel

Brush Type: S.
Pencil
Brush Set: Basic
Basic

Pencil
Brush Set: Basic

ORGANISING YOUR BRUSH PALETTE

A. Find your brushes

SketchBook Pro enables you to move or replace brushes and tools in the Brush palette for quicker access. Click the top-right icon on the Brush palette to access the Brush Library and locate all your common tools that you need.
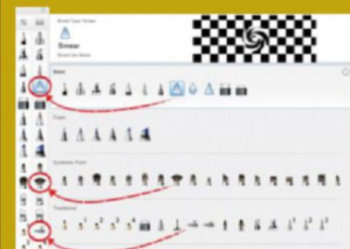
B. Replacing a brush

Simply click and hold a brush icon from the Brush Library, and drag it over to the Brush palette above the tool that you don't need and then release. You'll see that the selected brush has replaced the unwanted brush and been placed in the same spot on the palette.
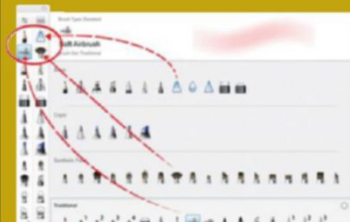
C. Moving a brush

To move a brush within the palette, open the Brush Library and locate the brush that you want to move. The process is the same as in step B: just click and hold the brush and drag over to the palette and release in the desired spot on the palette.

Photoshop

QUICKLY DEVELOP COLOUR AND MOOD

Carmen Sinek shows you how to bring colour and mood to a greyscale sketch, quickly and simply, using Photoshop's versatile Layer modes

Artist PROFILE

Carmen Sinek
COUNTRY: US

Carmen is a freelance concept artist and illustrator currently working for Activision. She particularly enjoys painting ladies and purple things.
http://ifxm.ag/carsinek

GET YOUR RESOURCES
See page 6 now!

Early on in my studies as an artist, I was overwhelmed by how much there was to keep track of when making an illustration. Composition, value, colour, anatomy, perspective and so on. This method came about as a way for me to focus on one step at a time.

For this workshop, I create a sketch where colour plays a key role in how the image will read. The fantasy world should draw immediate attention with saturation and contrast. Only afterwards should the

eye wander towards the reflection and complete the story. By casting the character's real-world reflection in a shallow, muddy pond, attention focuses on the vivid world of her imagination.

You'll be surprised how much you can accomplish using only Layer modes. You can read online how these operate on a technical level, but I'll describe them as I think of them when painting. The goal of this process is not a final painting, but a coloured sketch that contains all of the information I need.

This workshop focuses on the technical process I use to build up colour, but no technique can replace a solid understanding of how colour works. Fantasy art gives us the wonderful opportunity to use colours in a way we wouldn't normally see in nature. But it can be difficult to exercise restraint when you have every colour imaginable at the click of a mouse. You need to know the rules before you can bend or break them. To this end, I recommend reading James Gurney's excellent book, Color and Light.

PRO SECRETS

Custom brush hotkeys
You can create custom Actions in Photoshop and use them to bind your favourite brushes to the function keys. Go to Windows>Actions. Click the icon for Create New Action at the bottom. In the pop-up menu, name your Action and select which function key you want to use. Then just click the round Record button, select the brush you want and click Stop. The brush will now be mapped to that function key.

1 Organise your layers
Not only does organising your layers make it easy to carry out any placement or size adjustments, but it'll ensure masking out shapes is far easier. Shift+clicking a layer thumbnail will create a selection of that layer's contents, which makes creating layer masks for the colouring process much easier. Don't worry, you'll get to flatten it all down at the end.
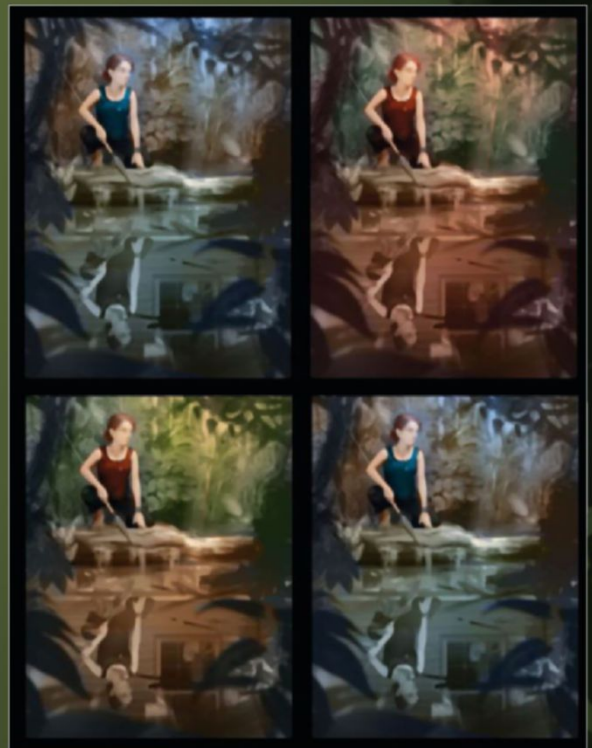
2 Have a plan
Colour can become messy very quickly, especially when working with the variety of tools available in Photoshop. It can be tempting to dive right in, but you'll save yourself a lot of time and frustration later on by figuring a few things out before you start working on the real deal. Colour studies are a great way to explore different combinations.

3 Underpainting the scene

I create a Color layer and fill it with a colour that complements my light source. I want to use a warm light, so I pick a desaturated blue-green. On a second Color layer, I add a saturated blue to shadow areas. When I begin to build up colours on top of this, I'll use a pressure-sensitive brush and leave a little of these colours showing through, especially in shadow areas.
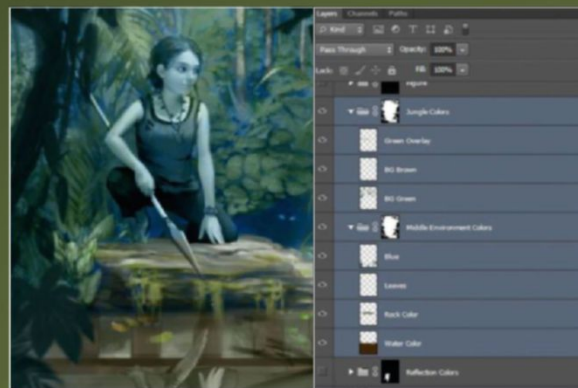

4 Tackle large shapes first

I think of ways to group my main colours. Colour is good for guiding the eye, but it loses effectiveness when used without control. Using separate Color layers, I block in the local colours of the water, rock and leaves. I want the water's green leaves to bring the viewer's eye down to discover the reflection, so I use an additional Overlay layer to amp up the saturation.
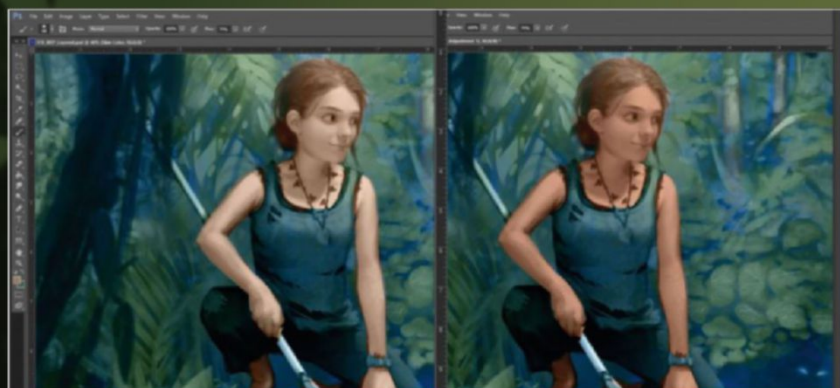
5 Don't be afraid to adjust elements

Once I have my background loosely laid in, I move to the focal point: her face. This is where I want contrast and saturation, to draw the viewer's eye at first glance. I start with a colour layer to block in her skintone, and realise that I've made her skin too light. So I create a Multiply layer and apply a desaturated shade of the skintone to darken it.
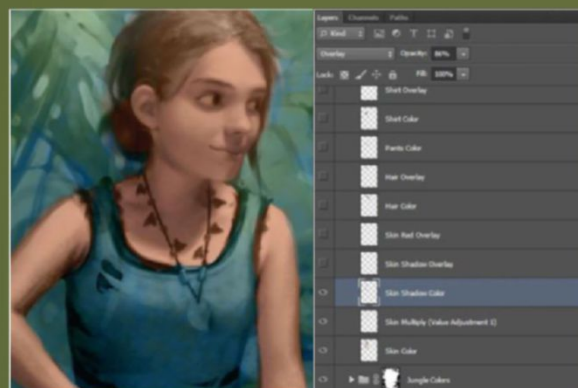
6 Apply shadows to the skin

I give skin colours extra attention. While the blue of the underpainting will provide a lot of the shadow colour for the background, I paint the skin shadows more carefully. I want to cool them down, so I use an Overlay layer with a desaturated blue. I often try several colours before finding the right one. I add this to the shadows with a soft brush, avoiding the light edge.

7 Shadow edges and fill

When light strikes skin, it bounces beneath the surface and between the planes of the body. I use an Overlay layer and saturate edges between light and shadow areas to indicate where the light bounces beneath the skin. I also indicate light reflected from facial planes, such as under her nose. Experiment with the value of the Overlay colour so it doesn't alter your skin values.
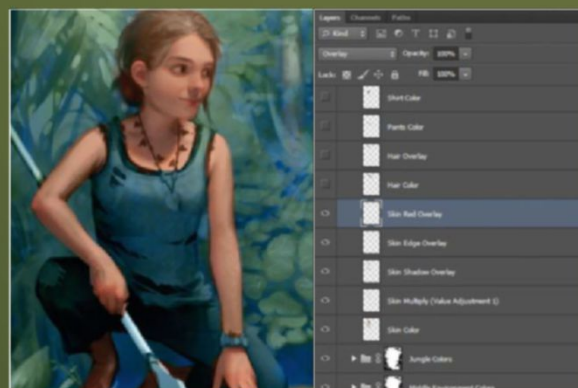
8 Ensure the skin looks real

A common mistakes I see in student work is flat, lifeless skintones. Skin has a lot of subtle shifts in colour, especially where capillary vessels are near the surface. Using an Overlay layer and a desaturated red-purple, I brush in colour around the ears, nose, lips, cheeks, hands, feet, elbows and knees. Be careful not to overdo it though, or your character will look like Rudolph.

9 Make use of local colours
Using different Color layers, I fill in the base colours of the rest of the figure, such as her clothing, jewellery and the whites of her eyes. I also add an Overlay layer with a light orange to help lighten her shirt, because I want it to draw the viewer's attention at first glance. I save her hair until last, so I can pick a shade that works best with the rest of the image.


10 Light source that's off the canvas
If there's a trick that helps me achieve the look I want in paintings, this is it. It's also one of my favourite steps. I create a new Overlay layer behind my foreground elements. Using a red-orange at 50 per cent saturation and a Soft Round brush, I add a primary light source originating off-canvas. I use a layer mask to hide parts that would be blocked by leaves or branches.
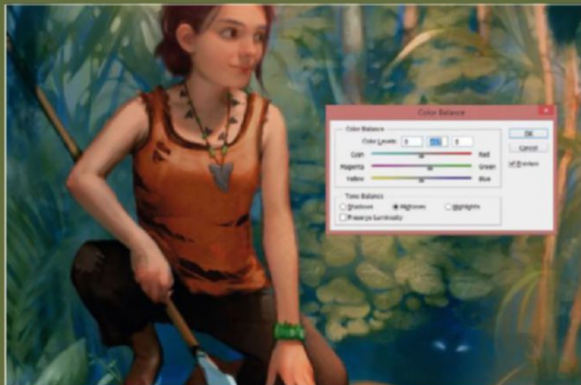
11 Adjusting my colours
I realise my initial colour choice for the skin shadows was far too blue. I use Ctrl+right-click to select the Overlay layer I painted them on. I use the Color Balance tool instead of the Hue slider for smaller adjustments. I open it up and shift the mid-tone slider more towards the green of the environment. She now feels more settled into the jungle, rather than pasted on.
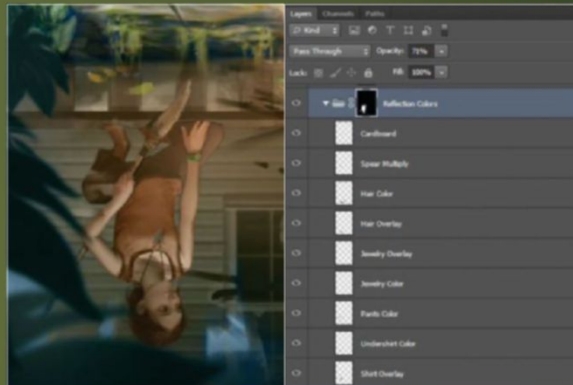
12 Tackle the colour of the reflection
Her real-world reflection should have similar colours but be subdued. I copy the colour layers for her figure and reposition them over her reflection. By moving those layers under the transparent colour layer for the water, they're automatically adjusted. When you're painting a lot of coloured light or transparency, good layer management becomes really useful.

RESOURCES

WORKSHOP BRUSHES

PHOTOSHOP

CUSTOM BRUSHES: BIG FUZZ

My trusty Soft Round brush. This is my go-to for applying soft colour gradients and glows.
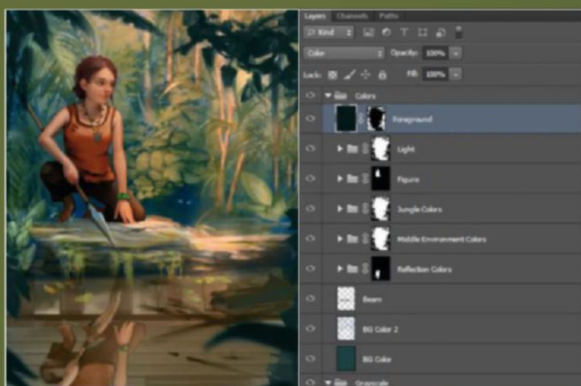
TEXTURE

When I'm adding colour to the background, I'll usually layer it on with a textured brush to produce some variation.

SPECKLES

Speckle brushes are great when I want just a little bit of extra texture.

CLOUDY

When I'm trying to add depth to an image, I'll use a cloud brush to add in a bit of fog between the layers.

13 Tweak the foreground colour
I'll save a lot of the foreground painting for after the initial colouring process, but I want to choose the base colour before I flatten everything. While the blue underpainting will show through more in background shadows, the cool colour feels a little jarring in foreground shadows. I add more local green to make them feel closer and properly placed in the image.
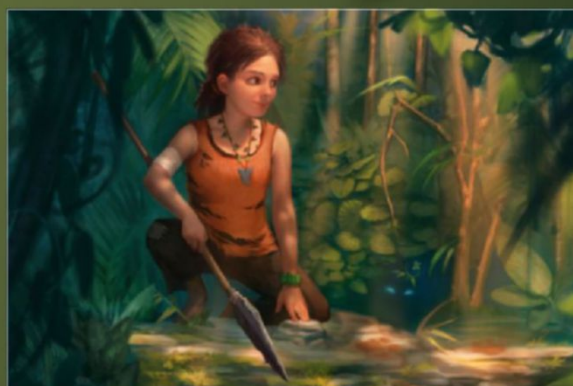
14 Save, flatten and Color Balance
Once I'm happy with the colours, I save a backup of the layered file. I take a deep breath and… Layer>Flatten Image. This is an essential part of my process while I try to get away from the super-smooth look of digital art. When I paint on one layer, I'm forced to approach it more like a traditional painting. I use the Color Balance tool to help harmonise the colours.

Photoshop
TAKE YOUR ART ON TO THE ROAD

Steve Argyle creates a Lord of the Rings-inspired digital painting, using Wacom's portable Cintiq Companion

I'm tasked with creating a promo piece for an event I'll be attending in Auckland this spring. But having three weeks on the road doesn't leave much studio time. What better time to put my shiny new(ish) Cintiq Companion to the test in hotels, convention centres, planes, restaurants and bars?

Sketching on it feels very natural. As long as you're near the centre of the screen, it makes marks just as you feel it

should. Nearing the edges, the parallax becomes a bit more of an issue, and things don't land quite as precisely. The screen is great. Small Cintiqs and tablets that I've used have suffered from poor colour reproduction and shallow viewing angles that make it impossible to finish a piece. The Companion has none of these problems; you can work start to finish on it. The high pixel density is awesome, but with one major drawback: its buttons and sliders are tiny. This exacerbates any

discrepancy between the cursor and your stylus. You can size up the interface, but that comes with its own issues.
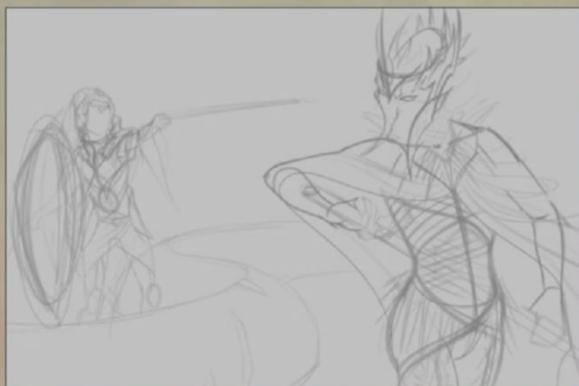
But by far the greatest advantage, and the reason to have it, is the portability. It's a bit big and heavy if you're comparing it to a tablet, but not so much so that you won't be happy to tote it around. Whether sketching, or working on finishing touches, the Companion can benefit your art and your schedule by enabling you to work anywhere.

Workshops

1 Thumbnail creation

I start thumbnailing, and select the composition best suited to the concept. In this case, an homage to Eowyn and the Witch King. It's an iconic scene, depicted by many artists who are way better than I am. So I decide to cover the shortcomings by adding more girls. Who says it can't be a Witch Queen? I mean, besides Tolkien himself and almost a century of tradition…

2 Colour roughs

Sometimes I'll tighten up the drawing right away, but more often I'll do a handful of colour comps first. The weight of certain elements will change depending on the colours and values used, so I try not to do refinements that I'll hesitate to get rid of if they're not working later. You know, like that horrific saying in creative fields: "You can't be afraid to kill your children." Whoever came up with that was absolutely right. Also, a psychopath.
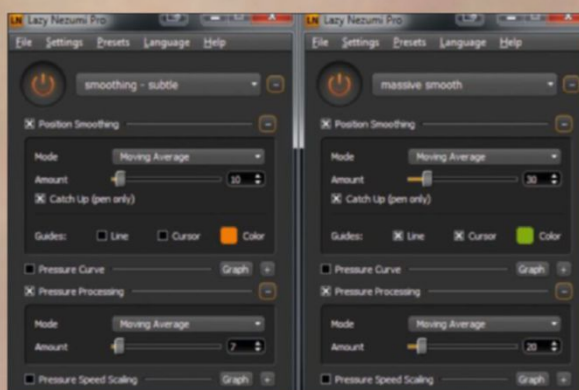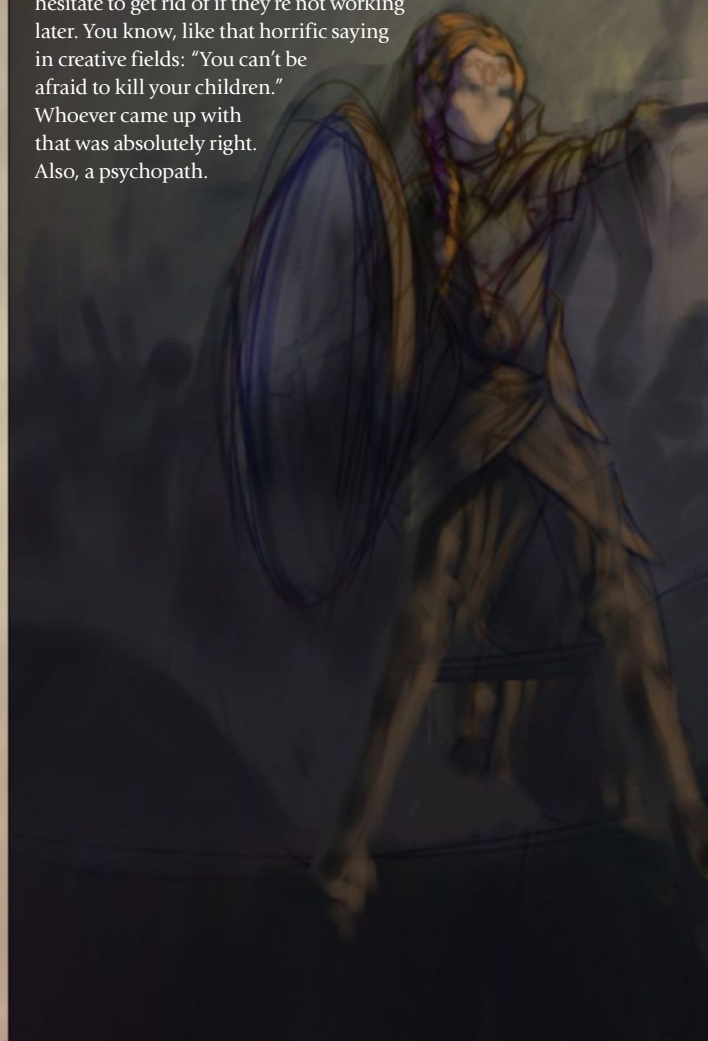

3 Drawing details

After nudging things around a bit, I decide that there are parts that need a drawing. I want part of the distinction between the two characters to be symmetry. The Witch Queen is a product of the corrupting order and absolute hierarchy of Mordor who should be sporting meticulously crafted armour and weapons. That means dreaded, meticulous perspective work. Drawing is, I dare say, easier on the Companion than on my studio Cintiq 24. It handles more like a sketchbook.

4 The benefits of Lazy Nezumi...

I used to hop back and forth between Photoshop and software with more brush controls, but I now use Lazy Nezumi (www.lazynezumi.com). This plugin sits between your tablet output and your software input. It can be made to interpolate pressure and position independently, as well as a lot of neat tricks. But it's also ideal for folks who use Photoshop for drawing.
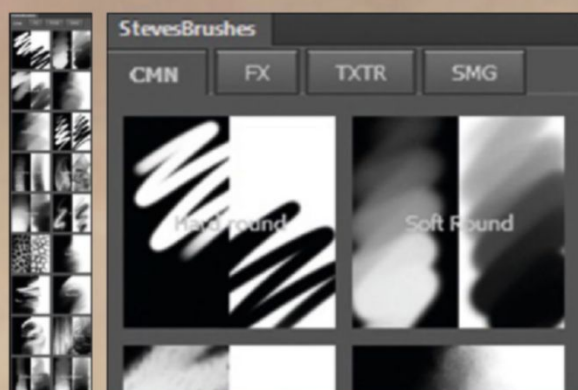
5 ...and Configurator

Adobe's free Configurator enables you to create custom panels, buttons and whatnot. Here's one of my tool panels. I can grab the tool and preset I want with a tap, and create my own icons to remind me what they do. Tabs help you keep things organised. On the Companion, this means you have any frequently used hotkeys mapped to buttons as well.

6 Auckland in Middle-earth?

I start working from the back forward. I don't want the background to be too sharp, so I'm using only the rougher brushes and smudgers. I'm asked to include the Auckland skyline, so I take the buildings with characteristic silhouettes, and make them a little less modern. I also want to imply a battle, but leave enough space for our characters to have their duel.

7 Reference spheres

Remember those spheres they made you Render in art school? Me neither. But it turns out they have a purpose beyond confusing and boring young people! I'll often create reference spheres for my scene's lighting scenarios, and use those as both my guides and my palate. They're particularly helpful for metallic surfaces. Great modern masters like Donato Giancola will take chrome spheres to their reference shoots. ➤➤
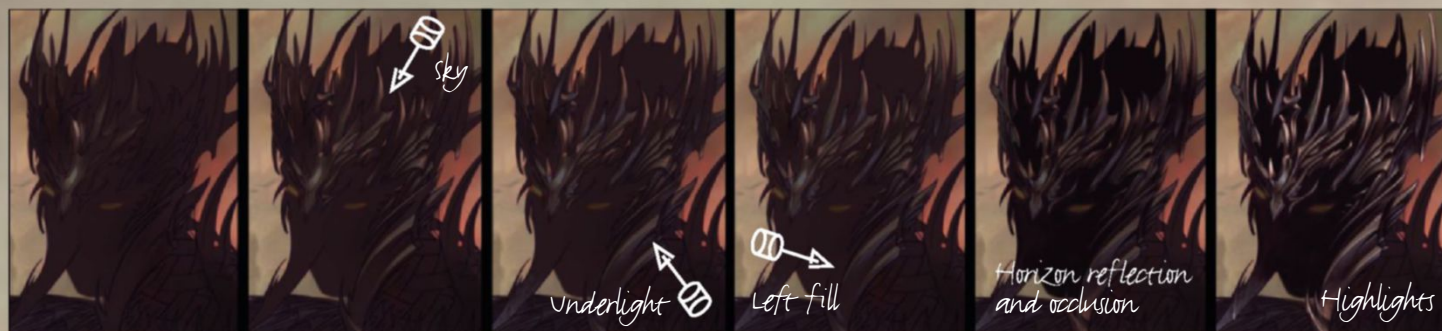
sky

Underlight   Left fill   Horizon reflection and occlusion   Highlights

8 One step at a time

Even the most complex lighting, materials and textures can be broken down into simple components. Here, I'm rendering the light sources one at a time. I start with something around 80 per cent as dark as it'll get, so I can still see the line work. For each pass, I'm only concerned about adding light.

Trace from your light source, don't light anything that's blocked, and cast shadows will take care of themselves. In the fifth panel, I'm adding occlusion shadows, and darkening where the horizon reflection separates the land from the sky. Lastly, highlights punch out all those fun little pointy bits.

9 The cloak

I continue the process for the rest of the metallic surfaces, and add a little texture to make them look old and corroded. The cloak, being a rougher surface, needs to be approached differently. For realism and visual interest, it's crucial to consider the materials portrayed in your work, and render them accordingly. For this fabric, the light hitting it is diffused, leading to a more uniform colour and value to the lit areas. Highlights are barely visible and quite broad, and the overall contrast is lower.

Remap

Paint in black and white

Base

Screen type group
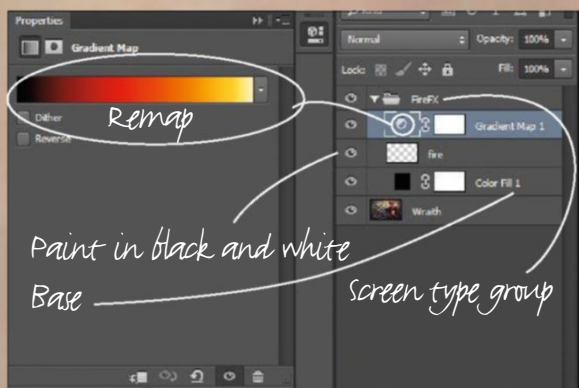
10 Fire is more about colour than shape

Photoshop has a great Fill layer type that remaps value to a customisable gradient, and quickly makes fire effects. Start with a group and set it to Screen. On the bottom, create a black layer and an empty layer for painting on. Then create a Gradient Map layer and adjust the gradient to fall through the effect's colours. Finally, paint with white in the empty layer.
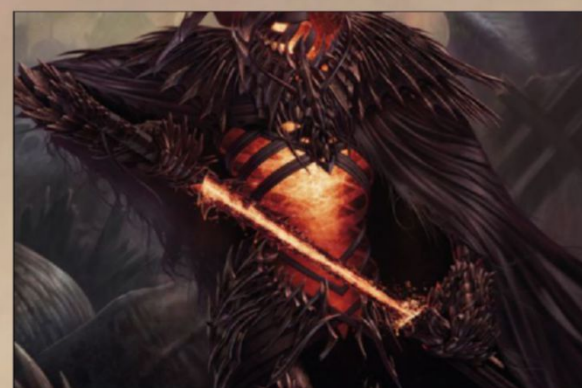
11 Spirit armour

I want to show that the Witch Queen no longer has true physicality of her own. It's more believable if there's nothing vulnerable to chop or stab. I also want to impart a visual connection and some extra threat to the Morgul blade. Flat black, but surging with energy, melting the scabbard it's being drawn from. Seems dangerous to me.

12 Refining the Shield maiden

Now I focus on our intrepid heroine. I didn't take a lot of time to refine her in the drawing stage, so here I'm taking the opposite approach as I did earlier, and drawing in all the cast shadows on top of a rough blob of colour. I'm using a stronger light source on her than most of the rest of the scene, to imply there's a little bit of a break in the clouds to give her more direct sunlight without resorting to God-beams, which are the artistic equivalent of using italicised, underlined, bold text. With caps.
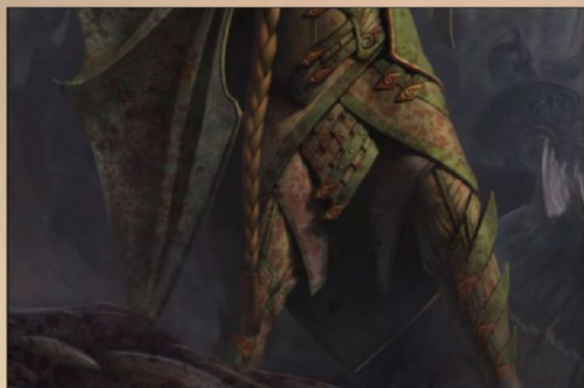
13 Details and textures

I add some local colour to add interest to her armour, and some dirt and blood to indicate that she's able to kick the buttocks of evil. It's important to consider context for your scene, and provide your audience with those little details that create history for your characters.

14 And I'm finished!

We've come to the end of our own epic quest. As with any piece I create, and if you're human, you'll be the same with yours: there are things looking back I might have done differently. Things I wish I had time to refine, or try something different. But every piece teaches something. Every piece is one furry footstep farther into our unexpected journey.

PRO SECRETS

Pricing your work

One of the hardest things for new professionals is to appropriately price a project. Terrified that they won't land the job, many artists will woefully underbid, hoping to get a foot in the door. However, you're more likely to lose a gig to underbidding, than blowing the budget. Asking too little will make you look unprofessional, inexperienced or desperate. And therefore a potential risk to the project. Factor your expenses and time, and bid accordingly. Anyone who would scoff at that is someone you don't want to be in business with in the first place.

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SB sketchbot

ISSUE 191
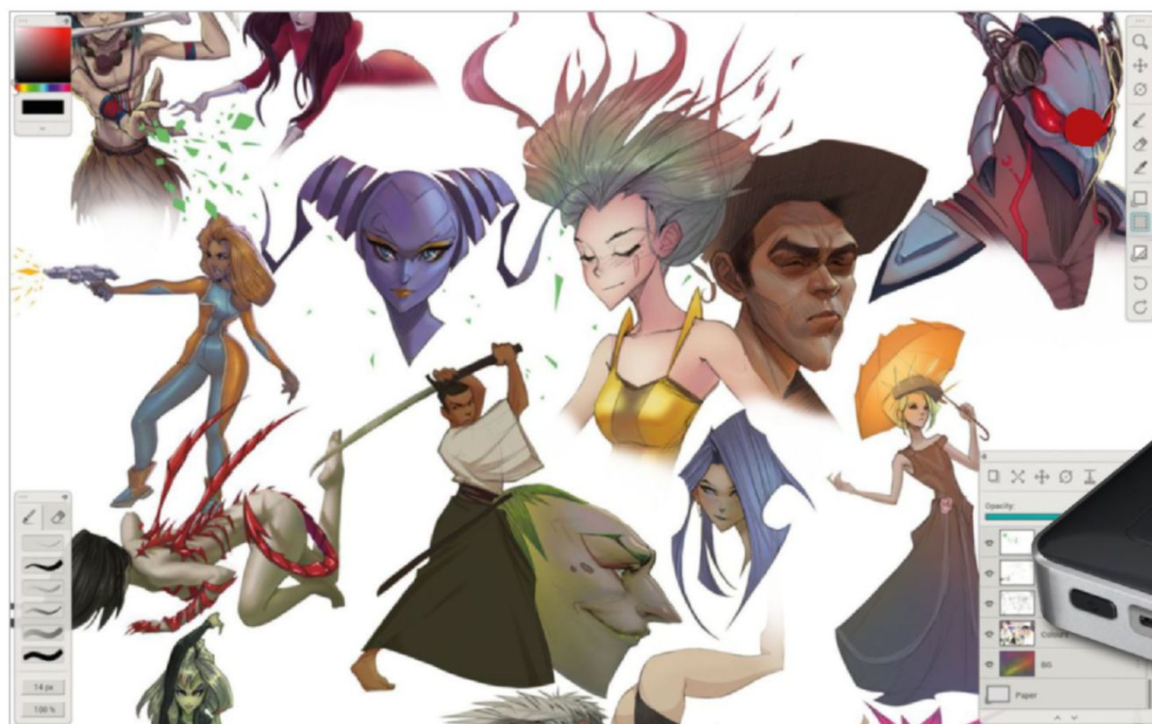ON SALE
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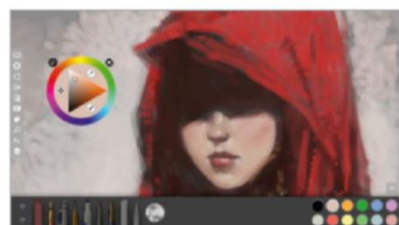
NO.1 FOR DIGITAL ARTISTS
ImagineFX
Reviews

The latest digital art resources are put to the test by the ImagineFX team…

9 PRODUCTS ON TEST

SOFTWARE & HARDWARE

90 Mischief 2.0
Despite the change in version number, this is not a significant overhaul of the unique art program. But there's still lots to like.

91 Sketch V.16
Quickly transform your photos into sketches with this application.

91 Sketchable
Draw and sketch out your concepts with this easy-to-use program. And it won't cost you a penny!

93 GW2765HT monitor
BenQ's latest value-for-money display packs a real punch with vibrant colours and deep blacks.

93 My Passport Wireless
The clue's in the name – this external hard drive works wirelessly. But is it worth the extra expense?

TRAINING

95 Creating Believable 3D Environments
Seth Thompson has years of experience building 3D scenes and is happy to share his knowledge.
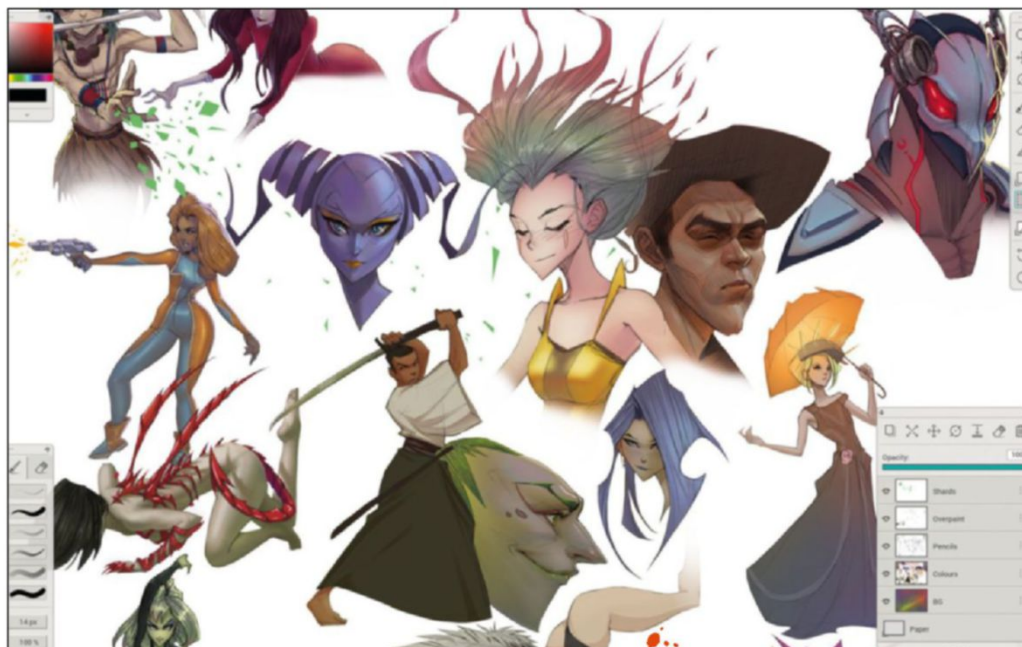
BOOKS

96 New reads
The Art of Film Magic – 20 Years of Weta; Battlestar Galactica Vault; Beginner's Guide to Digital Painting in Photoshop Elements.

RATINGS EXPLAINED 🖌🖌🖌🖌🖌 Magnificent 🖌🖌🖌🖌 Good 🖌🖌🖌 Ordinary 🖌🖌 Poor 🖌 Atrocious

Mischief makes a great scratchpad for ideas, as shown by Sycra Yasin.

Mischief 2.0

MAC & PC

MAKING MISCHIEF The Foundry takes the reins of this innovative program and adds a 2.0 tag. So what's new?

Price Free/£16 **Company** The Foundry **Web** www.madewithmischief.com **Contact** Via website

We were impressed with Mischief when we reviewed it in issue 101. This indie painting app presented a new way to create digital images, with an infinite canvas and scalable brushes.

We weren't the only ones who were dazzled: visual effects software company The Foundry has recently purchased Mischief. The first thing it's done with it is to release Mischief 2.0. But it isn't the grand revision you'd expect from that numeric subtitle.

The most apparent change is a panel-based user interface, which distributes elements around the screen. Mischief doesn't include a huge amount of tools, so this fragmented approach gives you a larger canvas.

Other minor improvements include trackpad support for Macs, multi-

Talented artists, such as Živko Kondić, excel at getting the most from Mischief's capabilities.

touch support, two additional custom swatch colour palettes, and more docks for custom brushes. Our chief complaint about the previous version was that there weren't enough interesting brushes – something The Foundry hasn't addressed here, although this might be because Mischief would need to be reprogrammed to make it work.

Thankfully, the principle ideas are still as compelling as before. The canvas stretches as far and as wide as you want it to, and you can zoom in as much as you'd like to. You can create mind-blowing works and rethink working in terms of thirds, or rectangular frames, or conventional ideas of scale and detail. While other programs slavishly adhere to the ancient rules of what art should be, Mischief rips it up and starts again.

The Foundry has implemented a new free version, which includes most of the features of the paid-for versions, apart from a few useful bits and bobs. If you like it, you can buy it for just £16 – a big discount on the original's £42 price tag. So while this isn't a huge update, there's enough to keep Mischief veterans happy (it's a free upgrade if you've already bought the software) while welcoming newcomers with open, infinitely long arms.

DETAILS

Features
- Infinite canvas
- Small file size
- Complete window opacity
- Image import
- PNG and JPEG export
- Custom colour swatches (full version)
- Dock favourite brushes (full version)
- Layers (full version)
- Backgrounds and papers (full version)
- Backgrounds and papers (full version)

System Requirements
PC: Windows 7 or Windows 8, OpenGL 2.0 or greater, Stylus, Surface Pro 2 and Pro 3 compatible
Mac: OS X 10.8 or above, OpenGL 2.0 or greater, Stylus

Rating
★★★★

The preview selection gives you a good idea of what your photo will eventually look like.

Sketch V.16

PROGRAMMED ART
Can this software sketch as well as an artist?

**Price** £44
Company AKVIS
Web www.akvis.com
RATING ✎✎✎

Sketch V.16 takes your photos and turn them in to drawings and sketches. While for many artists the idea of getting a computer to produce digital art is cheating, it could help give you inspiration. By converting photos to sketches it can also give you time to adjust and refine the art.

The no-nonsense interface enables you to get straight to work. Choosing a photo displays it in the main window, with a square selection giving you a preview of how the effect will look.

There are a number of presets available to instantly transform photos, and most work well. You can also tweak each setting using sliders that, with the help of the preview box, makes editing photos straightforward. You can also create canvas effects, which are completely customisable. For example, you can set the Material and Shadow properties.

From the outset, Sketch looks like a rather rudimentary piece of software: cheerful, but not cheap. Further exploration reveals a lot of depth to it, that with a bit of tweaking can quickly make some rather attractive works of art.
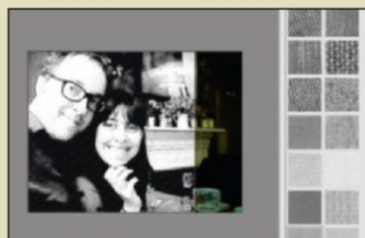
You can change the canvas material, giving you greater control over how your art looks.
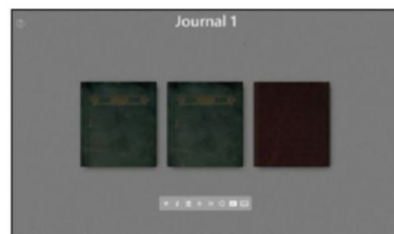
Sketchable

DOODLE POWER! Sketchable is a simple yet powerful program for quick sketching and drawing

Price Free **Company** Silicon Benders **Web** www.siliconbenders.com **Contact** Via website

For artists on the go it's increasingly important to be able to capture ideas, draw quickly to show a client ideas, demonstrate a method, or annotate an image. For some, Sketchable has become the ideal application for achieving such tasks. It works well on both a Microsoft Surface Pro and the Wacom Companion, and it's lightweight, easy to use, extremely fast, and responsive. It autosaves your work so you can pick up where you left off.

It's not a painting program, though. You can create paintings on it, but if you expect Sketchable to replace Photoshop or Painter you'll be disappointed. It's geared to providing the artist with a quick, flexible, easy-to-use yet powerful tool. And it succeeds.

Not only is it a great mobile application, but it feels as if it runs even quicker on a desktop computer (in our case, using Windows 8.1). Sketchable images are managed by arranging them into Journals, which are digital sketchbooks that you can create when you start the program. It's easy to have several Journals going at any time for different projects.

The opening screen displaying the current Journals. The name of the active Journal is displayed at the top. The desktop UI is displayed below.

Individual images can be saved as PNG or PSD files – Sketchable is probably the first and only mobile application that provides layers. You can export PSD files directly into Photoshop running on the same machine for any additional work.

There are a few additions or changes that would make Sketchable almost perfect for an artist's sketching needs: more layers and the ability to create paper textures are at the top of the list. But all and all, it's a great program that's easy to get familiar with, and with a well-thought-out interface.

The app is free, but most artists will want to make several in-app purchases (single tools from £1.27; bundle option is £7.68).

DETAILS

Features
- Eight layers on any device
- Resolutions up to 4K on 64-bit devices
- Artistic Color Picker with intuitive colour scrubbing
- Real-time brush stroke preview with scrubbing for Opacity and Size
- Adaptive UI scales to the display and accommodates custom user scale for touch, and mouse
- Resolution independent UI
- Assign any tool, tool preset, or tool preset with colour to single finger input or stylus eraser
- Up to eight custom presets per tool
- Two-finger gestures pan and zoom
- Customise your journals with covers, names and resolutions

System Requirements
Tablet or desktop running Windows 8.1

Rating
✎✎✎✎
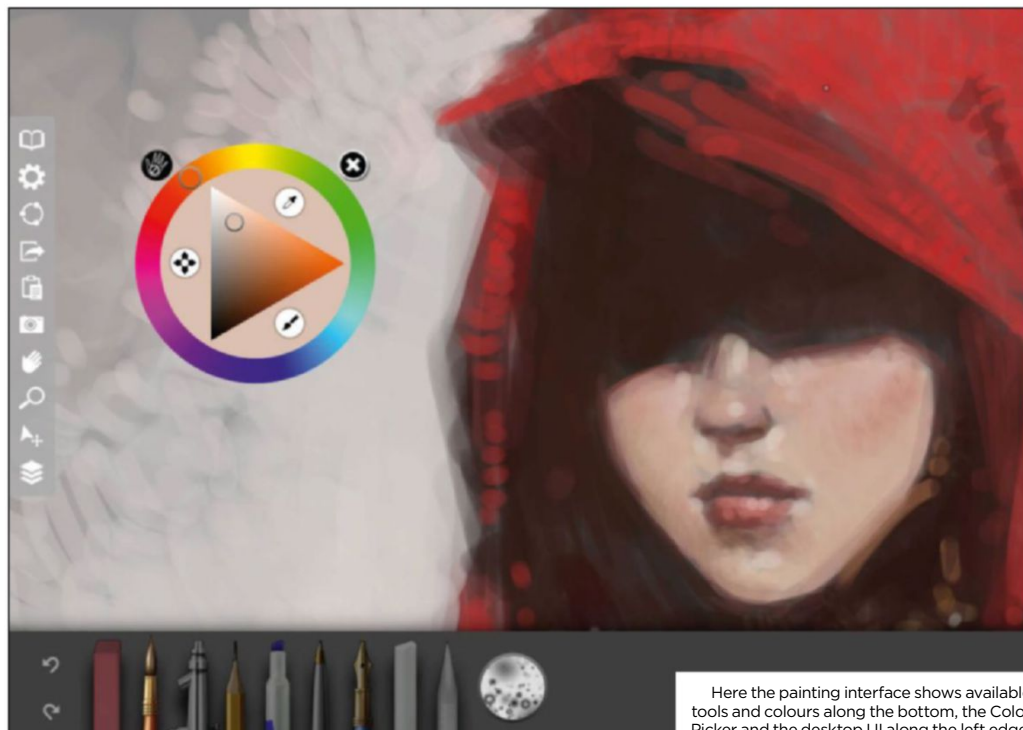
Here the painting interface shows available tools and colours along the bottom, the Color Picker and the desktop UI along the left edge.

net

MAGAZINE IPAD EDITION

The iPad edition of **net** has been completely rebuilt from the ground up as a tablet-optimised reading experience.

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The drive comes in big capacities, up to 2TB, which should be enough for most people.

My Passport Wireless

MAC & PC

GO WEST Store your work wirelessly with this convenient hard drive

Price £150 (1TB version)
Company Western Digital
Web www.wdc.com

RATING ✏️✏️✏️

One of the most important things you can do as a digital artist is ensure your work is safely backed up on an external hard drive. The My Passport Wireless external hard drive is designed to make this process as convenient as possible, because you don't even need to plug it into your PC or Mac.

The hard drive broadcasts its own wireless network, so all you need to do from your computer is connect to it, then open your web browser and go to http://mypassport.

Instead of a website, you'll see all the files and folders you've saved on the hard drive. This means you can quickly and easily share them, without the need for wires.

You can also use the Wi-Fi connection to copy files. However, this can be a slow process because the Wi-Fi included with the My Passport Wireless isn't particularly speedy. Thankfully, the hard drive comes with a wire, which enables you to quickly copy large files via USB 3.0. An SD card reader means copying files from cameras and other devices is straightforward too.

Western Digital's device is certainly fit for purpose and the wireless aspect is neat, but if you're happy to stick with wires then there are lots of cheaper drives out there.

Although you can transfer files to the hard drive wirelessly, it's quicker to use the supplied cable.

The BenQ features a fantastic IPS panel with amazing colour depth, bright whites and realistic blacks.

GW2765HT monitor

GREAT LOOKS You'll struggle to find a monitor that's more accomplished and better value than BenQ's latest product

Price £275 **Company** BenQ **Web** www.benq.co.uk **Contact** Via website

Doubtless some artists reading this will be squinting at old, petit or simply moribund monitors. **If that's you, then both your work and your eyes will be suffering. As such, it's time for an upgrade.**

Because technology moves so quickly, deciding what to buy is difficult. Over the past few years a 27-inch IPS monitor would have been the sort to aim for. That's because In-Plane Switching monitors generally offer great contrast and exacting black levels. Today though, 4K is the new-kid-on-the block and the technology is turning heads and wallets.

Beyond offering artists new levels of resolution, even inkier blacks and pin-sharp detail, 4K's arrival is good news for another reason: it's made IPS monitors cheaper. For less than £300 you can pick up the BenQ.

So what does your cash get you? Straight off the bat, the BenQ offers a classically good-looking IPS panel, with great colours, decent blacks and outstanding white saturation. The only issue we have with the panel itself is

that it does suffer ever so slightly from input lag – a delay between the monitor receiving a signal and it being displayed on the screen.

Input lag is a highly subjective issue and it's very minimal here. Some people don't feel it, while others find it annoying. If you're concerned that you're in the latter camp, try before you buy. That said, there's more good news. Despite the monitor's comparatively cheap price, it's certainly not built like a budget machine. It's solidly constructed and packs a full tilt/swivel stand that supports both landscape and portrait viewing.

If you want to nitpick, the shiny plastic chassis does lend the BenQ a slightly outdated, mid-noughties look. However, the bezel doesn't detract from the excellent panel.

The monitor also features the now-familiar BenQ On Screen Display, dynamically displaying each option on-screen beside the relevant button. It's a great addition.

In conclusion, for less than £300, this is an impressive IPS screen and, as such, a great buy.

DETAILS

Features
- 27-inch screen
- LED black light
- 2,560x1,440 max resolution
- 0.2331mm dot pitch
- 1.07 billion colours
- IPS panel
- 1,000:1 native contrast
- D-sub/DVI-DL/DP1.2/HDMI1.4/
- Headphone jack/line-in inputs
- 55W power consumption
- 0.5W power saving mode

Rating
✏️✏️✏️✏️✏️

Grass and stones are hard to get right in 3D, but Seth has some cool tricks to achieve variety without overloading your computer.

Seth Thompson's Unmystified is a brilliant piece, modelled and rendered in 3D. His video shares many of his practices and techniques.
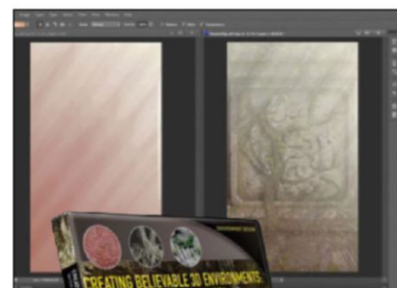
Creating Believable 3D Environments

THE MASTER Seth Thompson has lots of experience in building amazing 3D scenes, and has plenty of ways you can do the same

Publisher The Gnomon Workshop   **Price** £37   **Format** DVD/download   **Web** www.thegnomonworkshop.com

Seth Thompson's Unmystified image caused a stir when he published it online in 2013. In this video, Seth delves into the techniques he used to sculpt, light and render this stunning 3D-rendered artwork.

In an extended introduction, Seth shares his approach to broader disciplines such as workflow and file organisation. Collaborating in large-scale projects has taught him the value of working efficiently, and there are several valuable insights here.

There's also a strong chapter that looks at composition and how to lead the eye around the picture frame, in which Seth uses annotated examples from classical painting. Lighting plays an important part, as the artist shows how his deliberate arrangement of highlights and shadows within the overall composition leads the viewer's eye towards and around the design details he's most proud of. If your compositional knowledge doesn't get

beyond simply dividing your frame into thirds, you'll learn a lot here in just a few minutes.

The heart of the video, however, is a practical guide to creating the scene's key elements, using 3ds Max, V-Ray, ZBrush and Photoshop. While the earlier chapters are accessible to both art beginners and seasoned artists alike, this segment demands that you have more than a passing familiarity with the software being used. But for anyone who's reached that level, the techniques shown here, including quickly sculpting a relief based on a two-dimensional design in ZBrush, will help you create assets faster.

Given the subject matter and the variety of software used, perhaps there aren't many people who will find every minute of this video to be pertinent. But there are lots of artists who will get a great deal from this – and you'll always feel you're being tutored by someone with deep knowledge and great attention to detail.

SAMPLE VIDEO

DETAILS

Topics covered
- Workflow and organisation
- Composition and lighting
- Using reference
- Sculpting and modelling
- Plant generation
- Dressing the set
- Realistic materials

Length
151 minutes

Rating

ARTIST PROFILE
SETH THOMPSON

Seth has over 14 years' experience in the video game industry as a cinematic artist, in environment and set design, modelling, surfacing, lighting and layout. He's Blizzard's cinematic environment modelling supervisor, and has created assets for in-game cinematics including Warcraft III, World of Warcraft, StarCraft II and Diablo III. Before Blizzard, he was part of Square-Enix's Visual Works Team, where he worked on cinematics for Final Fantasy XII and Final Fantasy VII: Advent Children.

www.blizzard.com

The Art of Film Magic – 20 Years of Weta

MASS EFFECTS Weta Workshop and Weta Digital, the effects wizards behind The Lord of the Rings and Hobbit films, combine in this lavish boxset

Authors Luke Hawker and Clare Burgess with Brian Sibley **Publisher** HarperCollins **Price** £60 **Web** www.harpercollins.co.uk **Available** Now

Weta Workshop: Celebrating 20 Years of Creativity makes up half of this lovingly produced – albeit expensive – boxset, along with Weta Digital: 20 Years of Imagination on Screen. The former looks at Weta Workshop, responsible for practical effects, costumes, sets and make-up, while the latter covers the visual effects wing of Weta, which brought Gollum to life and delivered the five armies for the final Hobbit movie.

About halfway through the Weta Workshop book there's a photograph of a silicone duplicate of a character's head from Elysium, with most of their


Peter Jackson wanted the dinosaurs of Skull Island to look more evolved than those from history.

face missing, replaced by a gore-filled hole. Flick the page and the tone changes to Jane and the Dragon, a cute New Zealand children's TV series for which Weta provided concept art and motion capture facilities. Somewhere in the juxtaposition between extreme violence and family-friendly fantasy sits Weta. This is the studio that switched from the bloody Braindead and Bad Taste to epic blockbusters The Lord of the Rings and The Hobbit without losing too much sleep in the process.

Both tomes do a grand job of telling Weta's story. In the late 1980s young director Peter Jackson joined forces with partners Richard Taylor and Tania Rodger to create the special effects for his film Meet The Feebles. Working out of a tiny Wellington flat, they created some convincing splatter effects and formed a formidable filmic threesome.

While Heavenly Creatures and The Frighteners gave Peter et al the opportunity to hone their skills, it was The Lord of the Rings trilogy that provided Weta with its best show reel yet. Both studios were at the top of their game: the visual effects department pushed things forwards
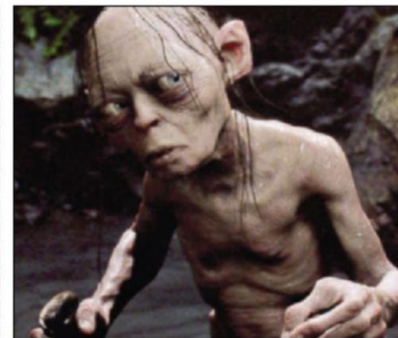
Weta pioneered the 3D technique of subsurface scattering, which sold the look of Gollum's wet skin.

with Massive (software for generating large crowd scenes) and the photorealistic rendering of Gollum, while the special effects team created "bigatures" (large-scale miniature models of key locations), and costumes and prosthetics for the hordes of extras playing humans and orcs.

Together, these two volumes provide details of every nook and cranny at the effects house. If you're willing to stump up the cash, they're pretty much the only behind-the-scenes or making-of books you'll ever need.

RATING 🗡🗡🗡🗡🗡

Battlestar Galactica Vault

TV STARS Forget Star Wars – TV's Battlestar Galactica has always been the best epic sci-fi franchise, as this book explains

Author Paul Ruditis   **Publisher** Aurum Press   **Price** £20   **Web** www.aurumpress.co.uk   **Available** Now

Battlestar Galactica tells of the struggle between humans and evil robots known as the Cylons. The story was visualised as a popular TV series in 1978, and was rebooted in 2003 as an innovative, almost documentary-style experience. The Battlestar Galactica Vault takes a look at the tale of the two series.

Every bit as important as Star Wars in bringing science-fiction to a mainstream audience, the original series was nonetheless derided by

One of a series of concepts for the reimagined Battlestar Galactica.
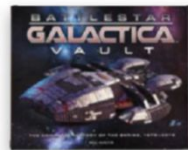
critics who compared it to George Lucas' blockbuster at every opportunity. Star Wars and Battlestar Galactica shared concept artist Ralph McQuarrie and effects guru John Dykstra, and it has to be said there are similarities in the spaceship designs.
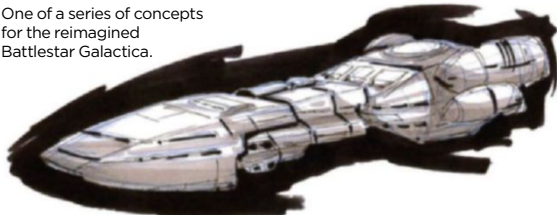
The majority of the book, though, is dedicated to the well-received reboot, and its 2010 spin-off Caprica. Battlestar Galactica was portrayed as a grittier and more realistic tale, using handheld camera work and a cast of largely unknown character actors to

bring the universe to life. And this approach to filming was successfully reflected in the design work.

The Vault is a letter of love from author Paul Ruditis to Battlestar Galactica, and it's peppered with fascinating behind-the-scenes shots and concept art that bring the story of the series to life. It's a perfect companion to a reinvestigation of both the charmingly retro original series and its ground-breaking revision.
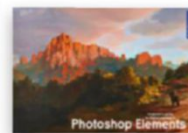
RATING ✍✍✍✍✍

Beginner's Guide to Digital Painting in Photoshop Elements

ART SHOP We go back to basics with this in-depth but user-friendly guide to the stripped-back version of Adobe's premier art software

Editor Jenny Newell   **Publisher** 3DTotal Publishing   **Price** £22   **Web** www.3dtotalpublishing.com   **Available** Now

We see a lot of Photoshop how-to books pass through the ImagineFX offices, but this one's got a unique perspective. It tackles Photoshop Elements, the cheaper version of the ubiquitous creative software, rather than the pricy pro version. As a result it's not going to teach advanced Photoshoppers anything new, but as a beginner's guide it's excellent.

Dave Neale shows just what's possible with Photoshop Elements, in his informative cartoon critters workshop.

Rather than a lengthy preamble on the differences between Elements and its bigger brother, the book hits the ground running by getting you to create art right away. After a brief explanation of the various tools the first proper tutorial, dedicated to using the Lasso and layer tools, builds up an impressively stark desert scene. It then delves into the basics of art theory, explaining how light interaction produces different colours, how to draw the eye through a scene with

flowing lines, and creating depth and perspective.

As a beginner's text it's surprisingly exhaustive, too, with the last 20 or so of its 222 pages dedicated to breakdowns of various images so you can take a stab at creating them yourself. If you're a fan of digital art who'd like to paint with Elements, this is a great place to start. Better still, it introduces the core art concepts at the same time.

RATING ✍✍✍✍

NO.1 FOR DIGITAL ARTISTS
ImagineFX
PRESENTS

FANTASY
illustrator

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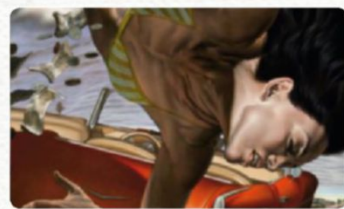
HOW TO DRAW
USING GOLD AND GRAPHITE
Yoann Lossel creates striking art with a Golden Age of Illustration aesthetic Page 108

🇺🇸 **Nicola Verlato**
LOCATION: US
WEB: www.nicolaverlato.com
EMAIL: nverlato@gmail.com
MEDIA: Oil

Nicola is an Italian-American artist based in Los Angeles. He studied architecture at University IUAV in Venice and taught painting and composition at the Academy of Art, New York.

He says he's equally comfortable in digital mediums. "I create my works through an articulated process, establishing the composition using 3D software, before recreating the scene using traditional art techniques."

Nicola has exhibited his work in both the US and Italy, including an installation at Venice Biennale in the Italian Pavilion.

IMAGINEFX CRIT

"Nicola certainly has a thing for upside-down people. But unexpected body positioning instantly grabs a viewer's attention. He's also a master of frozen action."
Daniel Vincent,
Art Editor

1 CAR CRASH 8
Oil on linen, 24x36in
"Car Crash 8 is part of a series about car crash accidents I made between 2012 and 2014. Each painting depicts the instant in which figures and objects are all suspended in a chaotic situation. The goal is to investigate chaos and trace more complex harmony, even in the tragic character of the event."

2 CONQUEST OF THE WEST
Oil on linen, 80x54in
"This painting illustrates a Middle-Ages European legend transposed into a Wild West context. A Christian knight kills a pagan knight. The pagan knight, right before he dies, is able to castrate the Christian knight. The painting intends to illustrate the confrontation between monotheism and polytheism in western culture."

Fergal O' Connor

LOCATION: Ireland
WEB: www.behance.net/fergal91
EMAIL: fergal91@hotmail.com
MEDIA: Watercolours, acrylics, fineliners

Fergal studies illustration in Dublin, having moved to the capital from his native County Kerry. When he's not studying, the Irish illustrator works on freelance commissions. Fergal's art is characterised by its intricate line work, images that benefit from multiple viewings, and often see his characters intertwined with their environments.

"I work primarily in pen and watercolours," he says, "to create work full of whimsical, imaginative characters and scenes that exist within a charming yet often dark universe."

1 THE CROSSING
Fineliners and ink on watercolour paper, 8.3x11.7in
"A treacherous canyon crossing to escape from the Valley of Lighthouses. Cero, seen in the centre foreground, crosses one of the many ancient narrow bridges that span the chasm that runs through the Valley."

2 CERO
Fineliners and watercolours, 8.3x11.7in
"This is a sketchbook character study of Cero, the protagonist in a recent series of pieces created for an exhibition. He is a mute."

3 THE RAVEN KING
Fineliners and ink on watercolour paper, 8.3x11.7in
"The Raven King stands watch over his treasure, for all those who would wish to take it from him. Cero, the character in the right foreground, studies the ancient scrolls that give hint of how one can discover where the Raven King hides the many treasures he's stolen from people over hundreds of years."
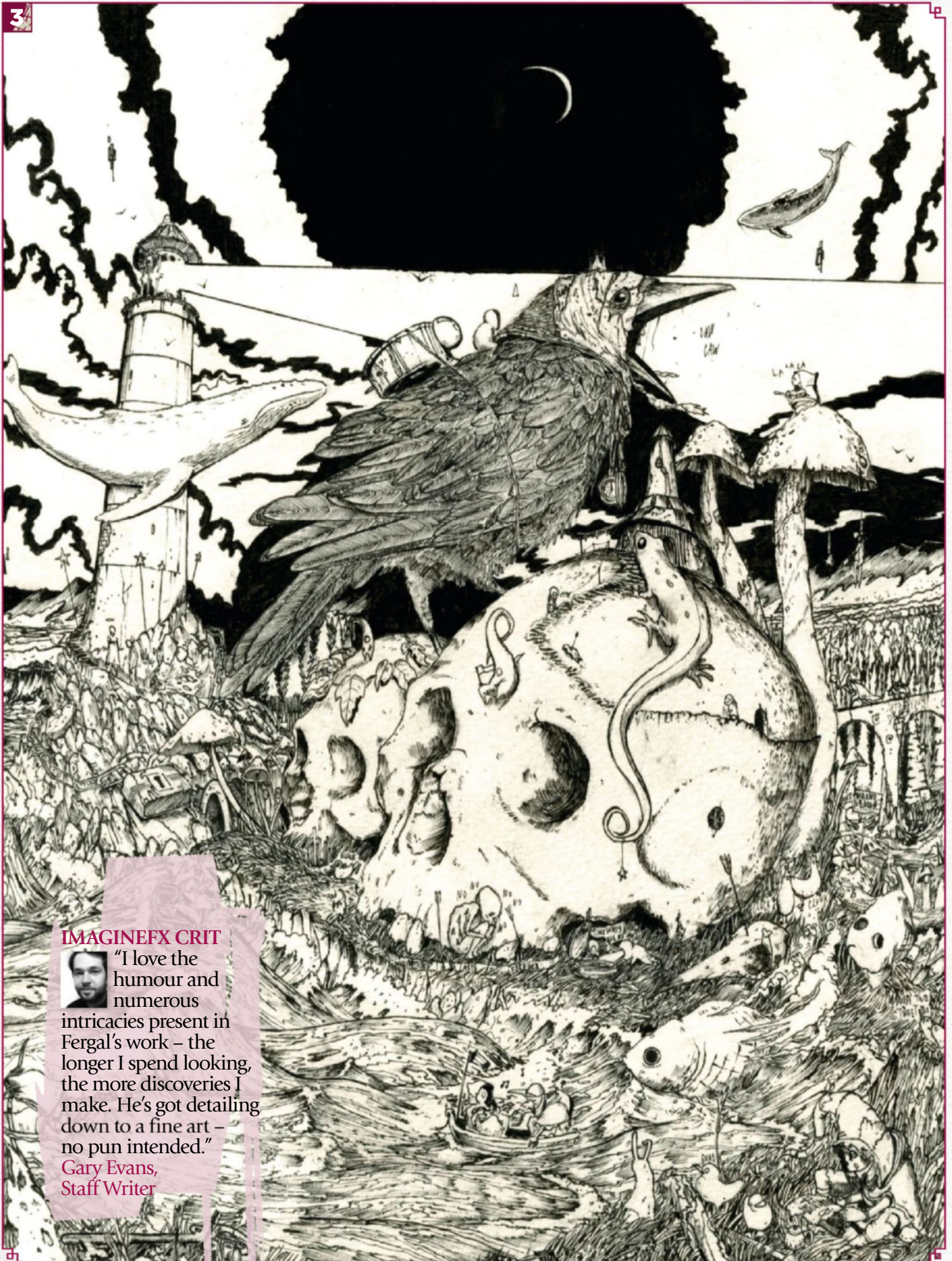
1

2

Creative Space

BALLARD LIFE DRAWING CO-OP: SEATTLE

OSCAR BAECHLER explains why he thinks co-operative life-drawing classes are the best way to make art accessible to all

Oscar Baechler founded the Ballard Life Drawing Co-op (BLDC) to provide free life-drawing classes for his local community. To do so, he came up with a unique idea: attendees take turns to be life models.

Oscar – a professional illustrator, animator, rigger and designer – had been attending drawing groups in the Seattle area for some time before setting up BLDC. He and his fellow artists would complain how the nearest classes dedicated to figure drawing were costly and a long commute away. So he decided to do something about it.

"I was also running Seabug (Seattle Blender User Group). Blender's an open-source 3D animation program," says Oscar, "and this concept of open-source figure drawing really appealed to me."

When the Dakota Art Store said it was happy to cover the cost of renting a space, the only problem that remained was finding some models…

"If you don't feel like posing nude," Oscar says, "that's 100 per cent acceptable. You can wear clothes – props, costumes and silly hats – just don't wear all black. That said, many attendees have posed nude. I posed nude at the first BLDC, just to prove to myself that everyone there would be academic and professional."

The response has been so positive he says others should adopt a co-op model, making life-drawing more accessible.

"Most people can find figure drawing in their town," he says, "but the economic barrier can be discouraging. The more people who come to the BLDC, the less work everyone has to do. Right now, if you volunteered as a model at the BLDC you could probably attend three or four times before it was your turn to pose again – 40 minutes of volunteering in exchange for upwards of 10 hours of free life-drawing.

"Right now we're Seattle's only free figure-drawing group, and I'm amazed at the positive response we've seen."

To find out more about the group's life-drawing classes visit http://ifxm.ag/bld-c. Check out Oscar's work at www.ogbog.net.

Seth Goodkind poses with a makeshift prop. All of the models at BLDC are also attendees, who ensure classes are free by volunteering to strike a pose.

SEATTLE SKETCHES

Life-drawing from Seattle's first co-op art group

Life models, who are all BLDC members, don't have to pose nude, but many do, as seen here.

The founder of Seattle's only free life-drawing group says other cities should adopt his co-op model.

BLDC meets twice every month at the Seattle Creative Arts Center.

By volunteering to model, the BLDC member in this sketch will earn around 10 hours of free classes.

BLDC attendees embrace a wide variety of media, from pastels to Sumi-e ink. The group is funded partly by the local Dakota Art Store.

One BLDC artist works on light and form in this sketch.

A sketch from a recent BLDC event, which take place on the first and third Thursday of the month.

Cardboard   *Foam*   *Acrylics*

MAQUETTES FOR FANTASY BUILDINGS

A maquette of an architectural subject reveals information about form and lighting, giving a fantasy building an unmistakable ring of truth, as JAMES GURNEY explains

Whenever I paint an imaginary building or city, I build a physical miniature first. Making a maquette helps me understand the volumes and sight lines, which all contribute to the success of the final image.

Maquettes help me figure out how to fit a structure on uneven terrain. I can light the maquette with either artificial or natural light, creating cast shadows, reflected light and other interactive lighting effects that no digital simulation can hope to match.

I create mountainous terrain by white-gluing chunks of rigid foam into the rough shape of the topography. After the glue sets, I drape pieces of plaster-soaked burlap over the foam base. When that's dry, I paint it with acrylic. For the buildings, I cut up cardboard and foam-core scraps, pre-ruled with lines to suggest the stone masonry. I also precut the windows and doorways, matching them to elevation drawings at scale. Sometimes I photocopy an elevation drawing and glue the paper on to the cardboard. I then hot-glue the components together into a cluster of buildings to match my sketch.

Setting the maquette on a mirror panel simulates reflections on still water. Dried moss found outdoors stands in for trees.

James is the creator of The New York Times bestseller Dinotopia, and his book Color and Light has been a No.1 bestseller on Amazon in the Painting category for over four years. www.jamesgurney.com

MATERIALS
- Plywood base
- Mat board
- Foam-core board
- Rigid packing foam
- Mat knife
- White glue
- Hot glue
- Burlap
- Plaster
- X-acto knife
- Acrylic paint

GET YOUR RESOURCES See page 6 now!

Concept sketch works out basic grouping, cast shadow, and foreground interest

Upper part of building in light, lower part in shadow

single boat

1 *Colour sketch from imagination*

The first step is the colour study. It's painted in oil and taken as far as possible without any reference whatsoever. Compositional ideas have a certain unity if they're guided purely by the imagination.

ARTIST INSIGHT
SIMPLE SHAPES
To visualise large cities, all you need are characteristic forms for the buildings, such as cubes or pyramids. You can buy these as wood or foam pieces at a craft store. From these you can build a schematic maquette, from which you can elaborate smaller forms.

LIGHTING
REAL VS ARTIFICIAL
Light your maquette in real sunlight and then try to match the lighting in the studio. See how different the key and fill lighting appears.

2 Building the maquette

Next I build a quick architectural maquette from rigid foam and cardboard. I plaster the domes with acrylic modelling paste. The smaller details such as gabled rooftops and railings are made from thin strips of mat board attached with a hot glue gun.

Trees are bought from a hobby store

smooth surface of dome made with acrylic modelling paste

Roofs made of mat board

Fast build using hot glue

Rigid packing foam

Mirror 12-inch square

3 Perspective drawing

Based on photos of the maquette I construct the perspective drawing. It's a good way to recreate and rediscover the forms. For buildings that are askew relative to each other, each building requires its own set of vanishing points.

Over 15 vanishing points

Centrelines for symmetrical forms

Foreground elements help place the viewer

Reflections planned in perspective
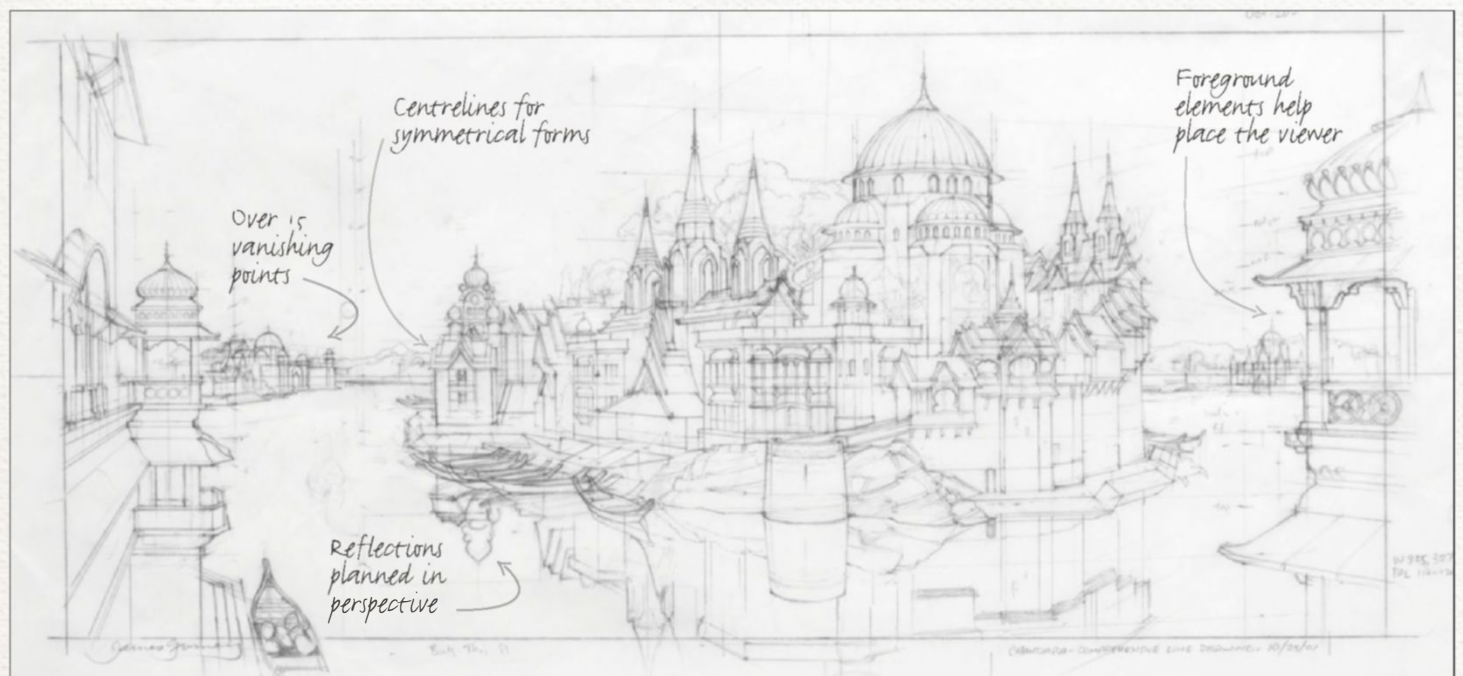
4 The final painting

As I paint the final image in oil, I refer to photos of my maquette, reference photos of real buildings, observational sketches from my sketchbook, and my first concept sketches. I try to stay close to the spirit of the original sketch, while giving it the believability of the other sources.

sky gradation based on plein air studies

Gold dome based on photo clip file

Reflection breaks up with small waves

soft edge to distant cast shadow

GET YOUR RESOURCES
See page 6 now!

Pencil *Gold leaf*

DRAWING WITH GRAPHITE AND GOLD

Taking the theme of The Neverending Story, YOANN LOSSEL creates a striking piece of art in a pure Golden Age of Illustration aesthetic

The illustrators of the Golden Age, the Symbolist painters and the Pre-Raphaelites all passed through my imagination and influenced my art. There's a wide palette of emotions in these images tinted with lyricism and sprinkled with symbolism. I like the ornamental friezes of Heinrich Lefler, the movement of Rackham, the poetry of Dulac, the lights of Doré, the softness of Waterhouse, the strength of Böcklin and the great classical topics of Alma-Tadema.

Art Nouveau, Art Deco and the Arts and Craft movements quickly filled up my influences, taking things into an ethical dimension, a reflection about art and crafts. All these painters, all these movements, pushed me toward the creation of a studio in a 1900s' spirit, an old binding press facing a beautiful lectern. I grew to be a lover of old techniques, collecting books of oil paintings. My old house in Brittany provides a convenient atmosphere: ancient, lyric, relaxing.


I've been working with graphite and gold leaf for many years now, creating bright ornamentations or golden backgrounds. This approach enables me to create the illusion of depth, despite the two-dimensional canvas. I like to add a natural touch, a bit of a wild world, symbolised by the petals that I fasten on paper. This combination of paper, graphite, gold and hydrangea petals pleases me and makes a lot of things possible.

Every year, the Gallery 1988 organises a show that features artwork inspired by classic cult films. When I was asked to participate in this exhibition (Crazy 4 Cult, held in Los Angeles), I choose to illustrate The Neverending Story in a Golden Age spirit. I hadn't seen the movie in many years, and I was surprised how it affected me and the strength of its message. Gold leaf will perfectly suit the Auryn pattern, and I will explore the fantastic landscapes of the book with graphite, because Falkor the Luckdragon is already becoming obvious to me.

This image will demand lots of work on nuances supported by different graphite techniques, especially on landscapes because they need a specific depth. An important consideration will also be needed on this golden pattern of the Auryn, the double ourobouros that I'm keen to depict. This symbol is at once of great interest and evocative. I have in mind to unfold it, to open it to see what it's hiding there…
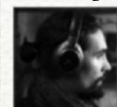
Yoann lives in Brittany, France, and his art is displayed in several galleries in the US. He also was published in Spectrum 20. He's busy preparing a book for 2016. www.yoannlossel.blogspot.fr
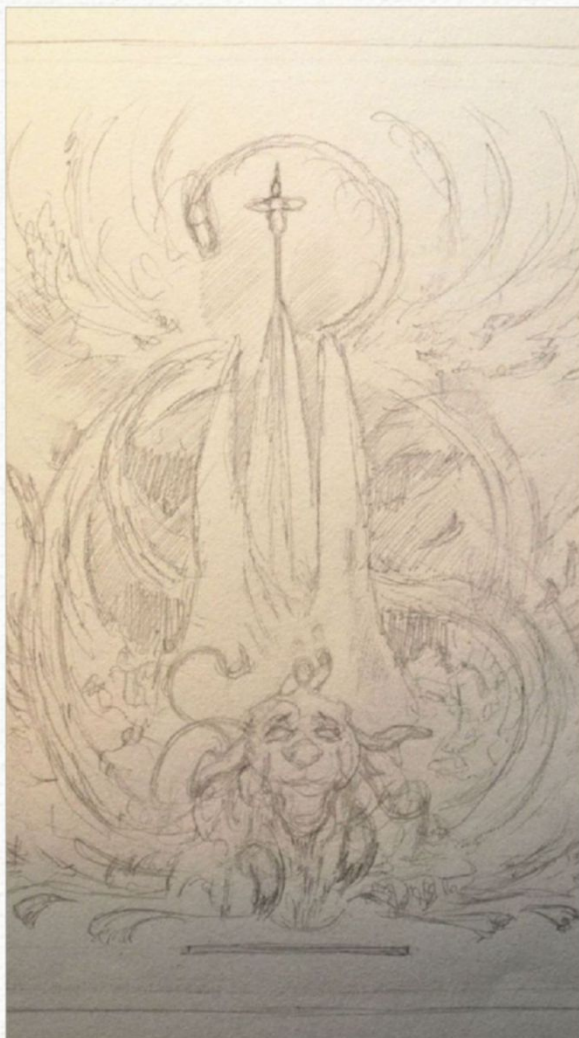
1 Linking mind and matter

Producing rough sketches enables me to visualise on paper the image I've mentally built up. It's an interesting step that highlights the limits of my materials. In contrast, there are no limits in my mind: I can change shapes, colours and proportions of objects. It's now time to choose an idea and confirm that my intuition is correct.

2 A word on composition

Composition is an art unto itself, a domain where you can play with shapes and guide the viewer. Everything must serve the idea. You have to give the illusion of life on a two-dimensional canvas. To check that the composition is working, I use gold paint to indicate where the gold leaf will eventually placed. This saves time – and money! – later on.

3 Preparing the paper

Because I plan to use a graphite wash technique, I need to stretch my sheet of paper to prevent it from crinkling. I soak the back of the paper, then flip it over and fasten it with strips of kraft. As it dries, the paper will shrink and take its final dimensions.

4 Generate a detailed drawing

My art process always involves developing an initial sketch, which will be loose, enabling me to develop the composition as I see fit without any limitations. I organise the primary elements, and this gives an impulse, a movement, to the scene. I use pencils ranging from 3H to H.

5 *Establishing an atmosphere*
I create an atmosphere using a graphite wash. This stage has two functions: it helps to get me into the topic, and it defines the lighter areas of the illustration. I prefer to retain the white of the paper in my art, in a similar manner to painting with watercolours, and so I use a special type of watercolour graphite.

ARTIST INSIGHT

THE IMPORTANCE OF LIVING
It's of great importance to me to live. I have an irrepressible need for nourishing myself, understanding and feeling. I surround myself as much as I can with things that inspire me: books, pieces of art, bric-a-brac, music, movies…

6 *Getting into the subject*
I always start the detailing stage by tackling my main subject first, which I shape slowly. I want Falkor to evolve throughout the painting process; I have the idea that he's living as I paint, growing stronger with each step. I work with pencils, graphite wash and some white gouache, which gives the graphite a light blue tone.

7 *Developing the second background*
Based on the appearance of Falkor, I work out the shades of grey I'll need to create the different background planes in my image. I decide that I need a second dark background to bring out Falkor. It also gives me a larger palette of nuances to help develop the final background. I work on this with my graphite wash.

8 *The third background*

I move on through the planes in my image. The final one is a little odd because it shows the Ivory Tower. I have to create the illusion of a massive construction that's far off in the distance. Even though it's in the background, I ignore atmospheric perspective and pick dark tones. I use several dry pencils, ranging from 5H to 2H, and a graphite wash.

9 *Creating light*

For this step I use oxidised silver leaf, which has a beautiful water-green tone. I use it to give the illusion of reverse lightning. I define two little green moons, which helps me to add depth. These simple geometric shapes enhance my composition.

10 *Preparing the ornamentation*

I draw in the details of the ornamental figures that surround my central medallion. I'm keen to accompany the movement to create a style on its own that also matches the main subject. I like my illustrations to suit the spirit of the Golden Age of Illustration.
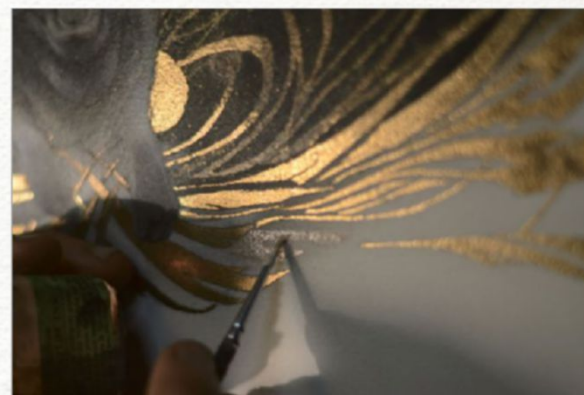
11 *Gilding and glue*

Now that my Arabesque decorative motifs are in place, I apply gold mixtion to one bit of the pattern at a time. There are many different kind of mixtion available, with various drying times. I mostly use the illumination mixtion manufactured by Kölner. I also use the three- and 24-hour mixtions, depending on the pattern I'm working up.

GOLD LEAF TIP

PICK THE RIGHT MIXTION
Try out different brands of mixtions to find one that suits your way of working with gold leaf. Don't underestimate drying times!

12 *Laying in gold leaf*

When the mixtion is finally ready to receive the gold leaf, I cut it meticulously and apply it with a brush. The gold leaf is fragile, and needs to be handled with care. I use a filbert sable brush to place the gold leaf on to the glue. This brush also enables me to remove any excess gold leaf.

13 *Precision cuts*

Using a scalpel, I define the gold leaf's outlines. This stage is all about removing the last bits of excess gold leaf and refining the contours of the motif. I use a range of different sized scalpel blades, depending on where I am in the creative process. A good, sharp tool is needed, especially on this step where precision and a light touch is all you can rely on.

14 *Enhancing the medallion*

Very slowly, I gild my pattern, going around my medallion. I maintain a balance in the final pattern by rubbing some parts with an agate, which creates gradations within the gold. I gild some parts of my image early in the process, so that I'm able to create these gradations. Indeed, using the graphite wash obscures my first gilding efforts.

15 *Where contrasts are settled*

In this final step, I rely on my gilding work to adjust any visual nuances in the piece. Some parts of my image need to be darkened, while others should be enhanced. In this case, I decide I have to bring out more of Falkor. So I apply white gouache to him using an airbrush. Because the light from the gold leaf is so strong, it needs to be balanced by other areas in the image. Then I step back from the artwork and call my take on The Neverending Story finished.

First Impressions

✳ *Bruce Pennington* ✳

A passion for ornithology led Bruce to paint the beautiful and the horrific

Where did you grow up and how has this influenced your art?
I grew up in the Kent countryside, where I became obsessed by ornithology. Up until my late teens, birds featured in most of my art. At school I regularly gave lectures on the subject using my paintings to illustrate them.

What, outside art, has most influenced your artwork through the years?
Everything ephemeral and strange has fascinated me, from my bird-watching days through to all that relates to the paranormal, which took over as my main interest in my early 20s. The UFO phenomenon in particular has featured in my science-fiction book covers, and personal works, so many times.

You're a child, you see a painting or drawing that changes everything… what was it and what effect did it have?
Around the age of eight there were two contrasting images, that still haunt me. The first was of a fairy queen, beautiful to behold, wearing a silken gown, pictured in a book devoted to fairies and elves. This I kept religiously under my bed. The second was in a vile horror comic that I discovered in my desk at school. It featured a hideous living skeleton that prowled the streets at night. It makes me shudder even today! The

EARTHWORKS
This demonic visage featured on the cover of Brian Aldiss's sci-fi novel Earthworks.

> ❝ I like to paint or draw on a partly blemished surface. I find it less inhibiting ❞

Next month
Jim Burns

TALES OF CTHULHU MYTHOS
A painting created by Bruce in 1974, used on the cover of a compilation of the same name.

two extremes between the beautiful and the horrific often crept into some of my other works, surfacing later in my book cover art during the 1970s for novels about horror and the supernatural.

Can you name one person who helped you on your journey? And someone who tried to get in your way?
Don Bueley at Beckenham Art College awakened my sense of colour and encouraged my artistic ability. I'm eternally grateful to him. The second person will remain nameless. Suffice to say that his tiresome criticisms of my work and his odious vanity did him no favours at all.

What was your first paid commission, and does it stand as a representation of your talent?
The first I can recall was a painting, in oils, of an angry rooster, in 1962 when I was 18. It was commissioned for a French restaurant. The manageress and her

husband were delighted with the result. It will always represent my knowledge of bird anatomy at the time.

What are your painting rituals?
There are no rituals as such, only a liking to paint or draw on a partly blemished surface. I find it less inhibiting than a clean, pristine sheet of board or canvas. As for materials, they're a complete mixture. They range from graphite, pastel and crayon through to ink, gouache, acrylic and oil, often varnished over with various polishes to add depth.

Is your art evolving? What's the most recent experiment you've made?
As the years have progressed, so has my art gathered refinements along the way. One of the most recent experiments involved using torn or creased kitchen-roll paper mixed with polymer medium on board, then glazed over with ink and French polish to create an alien landscape. It worked very well.

What is the most important thing you've taught someone?
Never to hold back your ability, even if you're not happy about the client, the commission or its subject. You'll regret it in the long run.

What advice would you give to your younger self?
Whenever possible, create works for yourself that you enjoy doing, which can serve as examples of your art for a future portfolio. In addition, never include works you're not happy with. Quality should prevail over quantity.

How has the industry changed for good since you've been working in it?
Digital art has produced numerous advantages in the realm of special effects. Though I still prefer the works of the Old Masters.

Why is it still the best place to work?
Because, unlike the fine art market, it doesn't rely on the whims of art critics for its survival. It's the devotees of the subject that keep the best artists going, by purchasing the books with their covers on, and buying albums and posters featuring their work.
Bruce has painted 200 book covers. See more of his art at www.brucepennington.co.uk.

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30% more forests

No wonder you ♥ paper

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†World Forest Resources, 1953 and UN FAO Global Forest Resources Assessment, 2010

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Print and Paper. The environmental facts may surprise you

TWO SIDES

I ♥ MODELING

" MODO's flexibility and fast polygon modeling tools allow me to go through many iterations fast - exactly what I need when doing concept work. MODO's interface and workflows are very artist-friendly and intuitive. On top of that, plugins like Mesh Fusion give MODO huge potential to become a game changer across the entire 3D realm.

Gavriil Klimov
Concept artist

THE FOUNDRY.

MODO